

Bonaventura, Sicut, etc.

T H E

L I F E

O F

Our LORD and SAVIOUR

JESUS CHRIST.

Translated from the WORKS of

St. BONAVENTURE.



L O N D O N :

Printed in the YEAR M.DCC.XXXIX.





P R E F A C E

T O T H E

R E A D E R.



*W*HEN first I undertook this little Work of the Life of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, my Intention was, only to present you a true and faithful Copy of that Life, from an Obsolete Edition, supposed by some to be a Translation from St. Bonaventure.

This little Book was accidentally put into my Hands by those whose Devotion perswaded them, that (if reprinted) it could not fail of meeting with all Encouragement from the Public Zeal of every true and well-meaning Christian.

Animated by this, as well as in some Measure convinc'd of the Reason I had to hope for Success in it, I at length, after some Deliberation, determin'd to undertake the re-printing it, and was fully resolv'd to send it forth into the World without any

†

Alteration

P R E F A C E, &c.

Alteration in the Translation, or making any other Difference than that of a small Amendment in the Stile and Orthography,

Having however duly compared it with the Latin Original of St. Bonaventure, and perused the Whole with Attention, I found myself under the Necessity of altering my Intention in point of following the said old Edition. For tho' the Translator has therein mostly kept to the Text of the Saint; yet upon mature Consideration, I thought it more properly answer'd the End of a Collection than that of a pure Translation: The Editor having often through the Whole omitted many Passages of the Saint, and inserted others in their Room, such as were either agreeable with his own Thoughts, or collected from other Authors, who have wrote on the same Subject.

This induced me to lay aside that Edition, and made me resolve upon sparing no Pains to present you a faithful Translation of the pious and learned Author St. Bonaventure, on the Life of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST; and at the same Time made me use my utmost Industry, without the Help of any foreign Embellishments, to render the Stile as agreeable as the Nature of the Phrase would permit me to do, without departing from the true Sense of my Author.

I thought it proper to premise this, by way of a necessary Precaution to the
more

PREFACE, &c.

more unlearned, who being accustom'd to the old Edition, and unacquainted with the true Reason of the Difference they may find by comparing them together, might be jealous of my having varied from the original Text, and imposed upon them one Work for another.

The Introduction to this spiritual Work gives an Account, first, of the devout Instance and Sollicitude of the holy Angels in Heaven for Man's Restoration, thereby to stir him up to a devout Commemoration of Them, especially on that Day chiefly on which the holy Church solemnly puts us in mind to do it.

And as this Book is divided into Chapters, according to the different Passages of our Saviour's Life, therefore one part or other may be contemplated, as the Devotion of the Reader shall direct him.

The Subject of this little Treatise may be not only profitable and pertinent to every devout Reader, but even adapted to the different Seasons of the Year. In Advent may be read and devoutly consider'd all that Part from the Beginning to the Nativity of our Lord. The subsequent Part relating to the Nativity may be meditated on during the holy Time of Christmas. And the rest of the Subjects, as the holy Church makes mention of them, at different Times of the Year.

Lastly,

P R E F A C E, &c.

Lastly, whoever you are, Pious Reader, that by reading this Book, or hearing it read, shall reap any Spiritual Unction or Benefit from it, forget not in Charity, but remember to pray for him who has taken some Pains in giving an English Tongue to this pious Work; on Purpose that You and all devout Souls might reap the Benefit from it, which the extensive Charity of the Saint intends you, and was the chief End proposed by your

Sincere and cordial Well-wisher;

E. Y.





St. BONAVENTURE'S

P R E F A C E.



AMONG the many Panegyricks and Praises recorded of the Virtues of St. Cecilia, 'tis written: that she bore always enshrined in her Breast, the Gospel of Christ. The Meaning of which seems to be: that, from the whole Series of our Lord's Life and Actions, therein related, She selected such Passages as most affected her with Devotion: On which, with a Heart full of Candour and Integrity, and a Mind elevated by the utmost Fervour of Attention, She fix'd her Thoughts Day and Night; and when She had

The great
Advan-
tage the
Soul reaps
from the
frequent
Medita-
tion on the
Life of
Christ.

devoutly gone thro' the Whole, again; re-assuming them frequently, with a Kind of uninterrupted Circulation of Thought, and sweetly digesting them with Delicacy of Taste, she carefully deposited them in the Sanctuary of her Heart. The like Practice I recommend to you : As I look upon it to be the most material Branch of Spiritual Study, and even the most beneficial of all devout Exercises; and what is most capable of leading you to the Summit of Christian Perfection. For surely the holy Life of Christ, not meerly free from the minutest Blemish, but even divinely perfect, must be the best and only sure Fountain whence we can hope to draw the perfect Knowledge necessary——to arm our Breasts against the flattering, yet fleeting Vanities of the World; —— to render us steady amidst Tribulations and Adversities; —— and finally to preserve us from Vice, and facilitate the Possession of every Virtue. Frequent and habitual Meditations on that divine Subject being the readiest Means to introduce the Soul, as it were, into such a Kind of Familiarity, Confidence, and Love of Him, as will insensibly create in it a Contempt and Dislike of every Thing else, and will effectually instruct it, both what to do, and what to avoid doing.

And First, That the Contemplation of Christ's blessed Life strengthens the Heart against the transient Pleasures and deceitful Vanities

P R E F A C E.

v

Vanities of the World, sufficiently appears in the sacred Virgin St. Cecilia already mention'd, whose capacious Heart was so fill'd with the divine Sentiments gather'd from thence, that it had no Space left for the Entrance of vain Affections. Even amidst the Allurements of Magnificence, Dissipations of Musick, and other sensual Pleasures profusely combining, to render the Solemnity of her Nuptials the more inviting to the Sense, her Heart, unaffected by, and as it were insensible of all the flattering Appearances, remain'd immoveably fix'd on God, to whom she often recurr'd in these Words: O Lord! Render my Body and Heart pure and undefiled, that I be not confounded.

Secondly, That it renders us steady amidst Tribulations and Adversities, St. Bernard thus argues: Whence receiv'd the Martyrs their unshaken Resolution amidst the Atrocity of their Torments, but from the sacred Wounds of Jesus, in which their Hearts and Affections were wholly center'd? While they beheld and felt their Bodies torn and sever'd on the Rack, their Minds remain'd still chearful and triumphant. And where can we then suppose the Soul of each glorious Sufferer to have been but in the Wounds of Christ ready open for its Reception? Had it been lodg'd in its own Bosom, attentive to what pass'd within its lacerated Frame; it had been too sensible of the torturing Glaive to remain proof

against the Spasms thereby inflicted: Their Pains had been an Overmatch for their Patience: They must have sunk under the pressing Weight, and denied God. From the same divine Source not only Martyrs, but even Confessors, Virgins, and all who lead a virtuous Life, have extracted their Patience amidst Tribulations, and the various Trials of Infirmities incident to a mortal State: As may be instanc'd in the glorious St. Francis and St. Clare, who under the severe Pressure of Afflictions, Penury, and Infirmities, were not only patient, but joyful. The same may be daily remark'd in all devout Livers. Which is intirely owing to the pious Meditations on the Life of Christ: Which, as it were, carry their Souls out of their Bodies to lodge them in Christ.

Thirdly, That it is a powerful Check to Vice, and greatly disposeth us to the Possession of Virtue, is evident from this, that the Perfection of all Virtues is only to be found in the blessed Life of Jesus Christ. For where else shall we find such moving Examples, such sublime Doctrines of heroick Poverty, extraordinary Humility, profound Wisdom, fervent Prayers, Obedience, Meekness, Patience, and other Virtues, as in this most holy Life?

Wherefore St. Bernard says, that He labours in vain in the Pursuit of Virtue, who
hopes

hopes to find it any where but in the Lord of Virtues, whose Doctrine is the School of Prudence, whose Mercy is the Work of Justice, whose Life is the Model of Temperance, and whose Death is the Pledge of Fortitude. Whoever therefore follows this divine Pattern can neither be deceiv'd himself, nor deceive others. For the Soul, by frequent Reflections on his Virtues, is both animated and instructed in the Imitation and Pursuit of them; and at length becomes so habituated itself in Virtue, that the bare Light of it is sufficient to direct her Judgment in discerning Truth from Falshood; which is so true that many very illiterate Persons have become, by the same Means, profoundly vers'd in the most sublime Mysteries of God. By what other Means than that of a familiar and mental Conversation with his divine Lord, could St. Francis attain to such an eminent State of Perfection, so deep a Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and that Discernment with which he discover'd the Frauds of his spiritual Enemies, and baffled the Power of Vice? Hence 'twas, that he grew so passionately affected with the Life of Christ, as to render his own almost a Picture of it. 'Twas That he copied after to the utmost of his Power, in the Practice of every Virtue: And Christ, at length, crowning his Affections with the Accomplishment of his Wishes, he became totally transform'd into his Saviour by receiving the Impression of his sacred Wounds. To such an

St. Francis's great Devotion in the frequent Meditation on the Life of Christ.

eminent State is the Soul led by meditating on the Life of its Saviour: and yet, this is but as it were the Foundation on which the Soul rises to more sublime Degrees of Contemplation. For the Unction therein to be found, purifying by Degrees, and elevating the Soul, instructs it, and renders it capacious of all divine Knowledge: But this is beside our present Purpose.

Now I propose to introduce you, gentle Reader, to the Meditations on the blessed Life of our Saviour, though I could wish you a more learned and able Guide, being myself very unequal to so great a Task. However, as I conceive it to be more for your Advantage that I say something than that I remain silent on so useful a Subject, I shall endeavour to make the best use of my slender Ability, by discoursing in a familiar, tho' rough and unpolish'd Style: that you may the more easily comprehend the Matter here treated, and study rather to improve your Mind and Heart than flatter your Ears.

'Tis not Elegance of Speech, but the Study of the Life of Jesus you are here to give Attention to. For as St. Hierom says, Plain Language reaches the Heart, while florid Speeches stop at the Ears, which they flatter. Still I am in hopes that the Mediocrity of my Capacity will the better suit with the Plainness of your good Intention. But I hope still more,
that

that if you are but diligent in the Exercise of this devout Study, that the Lord, whose Life is here treated, will become your Master and Instructor. You are not however to imagine that we can either meditate on, or recollect every Circumstance relating to our blessed Saviour. Nevertheless to make the more devout Impression upon your Mind, I shall relate those Things in the same Manner as if they really had happen'd, which either have in fact, or may reasonably be believ'd to have happen'd, according to such devout Imaginations as a pious Mind is capable of forming. For 'tis even in the Study of Holy Scriptures allowable to meditate, expound, and understand differently as we conceive most expedient. In this however all due Regard must be paid to the Truth of the Facts of his Life, to his Justice and divine Doctrine; and nothing be inconsistent with Faith and good Works. Whatever therefore I shall here lay down as acted or said by Christ Jesus, which cannot be prov'd by Scripture to be so done or said, you are to take in no other Sense than as the Effect of a devout Meditation: that is, in other Words, Take it as if I said: meditate or consider, that Christ might have so said or done. If therefore you are desirous of reaping Fruit from this Work, you must earnestly endeavour by a serious Attention to be present to every thing that is here written, said, or hinted of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that with the same Fervour and Devotion as if you

How we ought to meditate on what Christ either did or said in regard to the Holy Scripture.

P R E F A C E.

you both heard and saw them, laying aside for the Time all other Engagements and Affairs. In short, beloved Reader, I beseech you to accept in good Part the Pains I have here taken for the Honour and Praise of our Lord Jesus, and for your spiritual Profit as well as my own. And endeavour with all the Alacrity, Devotion, and Diligence you are Master of to put it in Practice.



THE



T H E
L I F E
O F

Our LORD and SAVIOUR

J E S U S C H R I S T.

CHAP. I. SECT. I.

*Of the Angel's Solicitation for Man's
Redemption.*



ANKIND having for the long
and tedious Space of more than
Five thousand Years continued in
their miserable State of Exile, not
one of them being able to shake
off the Clog of original Sin, and
soar to his native Country, Heaven ; the blessed
Choir

Choir of angelical Spirits (effectually moved to Compassion on them, and concern'd at the dreadful Havock Sin had made among them, as well as solicitous to see the Numbers of their own heavenly Legions again compleated, as soon as the Fulness of time was come, they resolved to renew the Instances they had often before made to the Almighty Lord : Wherefore presenting themselves before the awful Throne of God, with redoubled Earnestness and Devotion, they jointly prostrated themselves at his Feet, and made the following Prayer : All-merciful Lord ! Remember how You graciously vouchsafed, from the inexhaustible Fund of your Goodness to create Man out of nothing, and to raise him above all the Works of your sublunary Creation, by enriching him with the eminent Gift of a rational Soul capable of knowing you, and this on purpose that he might become a Partaker of our Felicity, and be a Means of repairing the Loss we sustain'd by the Fall of our reprobate Brethren. Yet behold, oh benign Sovereign, the whole Species lies still involv'd in inextricable Ruin ; out of which not one has been able to escape hither in the long Space of many thousand Years. Our Enemies thence gather new Matter of Triumph : Their continual Victories over them suffer not our Ruins to be repair'd by them ; while the Prison of Hell grows daily more throng'd with them : To what End then are they created, oh Lord ? *Why are the Souls, that confess to you, deliver'd up a Prey to Beasts ?* Psal. lxxiii. We are not insensible that this Severity perfectly agrees with your divine Justice, yet please, oh Lord, to remember, that the Time for shewning your Mercy

Mercy is come. If the first Progenitors of that unhappy Race did inadvertently transgress thy Law; yet let your Mercy now repair the Injury in their wretched Posterity. Be mindful that you created them to your own Likeness. Extend then in Pity, oh God, your Hand to them, and replenish them with your Bounty. To this End *the Eyes of all are bent on you, as the Eyes of Servants on their Masters*, Psal. cxxii. till you deign to compassionate Mankind, and save them by a plentiful Redemption.

SECT. II.

THE Angel's Address concluded, Mercy and Peace, supporting the Petition of the Angels in Man's Behalf, pathetically pleaded for his Redemption with the heavenly Father: While Justice and Truth seem'd to make a vigorous Opposition against it: Whence (for Contemplation sake) we may imagine a Kind of ineffable Debate to arise between them, as St. Bernard relates in a beautiful and extensive Manner. But in this I shall be as concise as the Tenor of our Subject will permit me. For tho' in this Treatise I intend often to interweave his Words with my own, yet as our present Purpose requires us to avoid tedious Prolixity, I shall differ partly in the Manner of applying them. To return then to our Subject, the Sum of his Discourse, in the Place above quoted, is as follows: Mercy, in the Words of the royal Prophet, says, *Will God reject Man for ever, or hath the Lord forgot to shew Mercy?* Psal. lxxvi. Long and frequently

quently importun'd with these and such like Solicitations, thus at length the Almighty may be suppos'd to have answer'd. Hold Mercy, before I acquiesce to your Petitions, it becomes me, as an equitable Judge, to hear the Allegations which Justice and Truth have to offer against them. Whereupon the two divine Attributes being ready to the Summons, Mercy thus re-assumes. Mankind, oh Lord, stand in need of thy Commiseration, for they are become wretched indeed, even extremely wretched; and the Time for shewing Pity is more than come. Here Truth, interrupting the Plea of Mercy, begins: 'Tis meet, oh Lord, that you fulfill your divine Word. Let *Adam* die and all his Race with him, since all in him impiously tasted the forbidden Fruit. Wherefore then, oh Lord, *replies* Mercy, wherefore do I subsist? If you forbear for ever to commiserate; there's an End of me: This thy Truth must acknowledge. Yes, *rejoins* Truth, but yet, oh eternal Father, if prevaricating Man can elude thy Sentence, what becomes of me? Can I, as thou hast promis'd, persist to Eternity? Thus the divine Pleaders continuing to support their Suit against each other, the eternal Father at length remits the Cause to his Son. Before whom Mercy and Truth renewing their former Pleas, Truth thus added: I confess, oh Lord, that the Zeal which Mercy exerts in Man's Behalf is good and worthy all Praise: but does she therein act comfortably to Justice in persuading thee rather to spare those Prevaricators than me her Sister Attribute? Ah beloved Truth, *replies* Mercy, rather consider, that your indignant Rigour spares neither Man nor me: By refusing to com-

miserate

miserate him you involve me in his Destruction, me your Sister Mercy. But Truth, unsooth'd by all that Mercy could offer, still farther urg'd: Thou, oh Lord, art here made a Party in this Cause, and therefore it highly behoves thee not to suffer the Word of thy eternal Father to be made void. After this Manner persisted the divine Parties in opposing each other, till at length all-uniting Peace, with her heavenly Voice interposing, thus address'd them. Spare these Disputes, Ye heavenly Offspring of God. Contention suits but ill such kindred Virtues. Still the Debate was important and the Reasons on both Sides so strong and powerful, that no Means appear'd of reconciling Mercy and Truth in regard to Mankind, till the divine and royal Judge gave to Peace, who stood the nearest to his awful Throne, the following ineffable Decree to read. Whereas our eternal Father's divine Offspring, Truth and Mercy, have laid before us their opposite Allegations concerning the Salvation or Perdition of our hapless Creature Man: The Former alledging, that, if the Sentence of Death pass'd upon *Adam* should be revers'd, Truth must cease to be: The Latter instancing, on the other Side, that, if it is not revers'd, Mercy herself must be involv'd in the Destruction of *Adam*. Our divine Wisdom suggests us a Medium to preserve both inviolable and uninjur'd. Let Death then be made a desirable Good: That the Apprehensions of all may be remov'd, and their Ends obtain'd. No sooner was the divine Decree pronounc'd, than all, applauding the Wisdom of it, silently consented that *Adam* should die, yet Death be a Means of saving Mercy to him. But hence a

The ineffable Decree of God.

new

Death en-
ter'd by
Sin.

new Difficulty : How, oh insearchable Wisdom ? How, shall Death become a desirable Good to Man, when the bare Sound of it is sufficient to convey Horror to the Sense ? Know, answers the heavenly Monarch, that, tho' the Death of the Wicked be superlatively wretched, That of the Righteous is inestimably precious, and the sure Entrance to eternal Life. Let one then be sought out, who, tho' not by Nature subject to Death, will voluntarily submit to it, from a generous Motive of disinterested Charity. Such a one, not liable to be detain'd in Subjection by Death, will force a Passage thro' it, and lead Captivity after him to a blessed State of Freedom. Here all acquiesce with Pleasure to the divine Proposal ; yet where, say they, shall we be able to find such a one ? Submissively, however, obsequious to the eternal Word's Decree without waiting a fresh Reply, due Adorations paid to the Almighty Majesty, Both depart in search of him : Truth resolving to range the Earth, and Mercy the wide Dominions of Heaven, according to the Words of the Prophet : *Thy Mercy, oh Lord, is in Heaven, and thy Truth even to the Clouds*, Psal. xxxv. It encompasses the Universe, Yet how vain, alas, their Researches ! Truth, traveling round the World, finds no one free from Guilt, not even the Infant of a Day. And Mercy in vain seeks, throughout Heaven, one who has Charity equal to so great an Undertaking. Alas ! all Mankind are but inferior Servants, and the best of them must, even when they act well, say from *St. Luke, chap. xvii.* that they are but *unprofitable Servants*. As none therefore could be found so abounding in Charity as to lay down their Life for

for such useless Servants: 'Twas to no purpose for Truth and Mercy to seek any longer. Hence return'd to the Almighty's Presence at the appointed Time, without the desir'd Success, Peace with a benevolent Countenance thus prevents them. Ah! heavenly Sisters, know you not, or have you forgot: That *there is not one on Earth who does good*: No not even one. Or who in Heaven or on Earth but He, whose Wisdom gave you the ineffable Advice you are endeavouring to pursue, can assist you to effect it? This we heard the All-wise Monarch spoke. It repents me that I made Man: Yet as I have made him, it becomes the Immenfity of my Goodness to do Satisfaction for him. Wherefore calling to him the Angel *Gabriel*, Go, says he, *and tell the Daughter of Sion: Behold your King comes.* — Thus far from St. *Bernard*. Hence you may see of how dangerous and fatal a Consequence Sin has been and still is, and how great the Difficulty of applying a Remedy to it. To this Purpose however the above mention'd Attributes seem best to accord and unite in the Person of God the Son. For on one Side the Person of the Father, bearing in Appearance a terrible and powerful Aspect, might seemingly give Cause of Apprehension for Peace and Mercy. On the other Side the Person of the Holy Ghost, all-bountiful and gracious, might seemingly give no less Room for Apprehension to Truth and Justice. So that the Person of the Son, between both, was wisely accepted as Mediator in the important Work. This however must be understood, not in a strict Sense, but a mystical and assum'd one. Thus then was at length fulfill'd that great Prophecy

phesy of the Psalmist, *Mercy and Truth met together, Justice and Peace kiss'd each other.* Psalm lxxxiv.

Thus much may suffice for a pious Meditation on what, we may devoutly conceive, might probably pass in Heaven relating to Man's Redemption.



CHAP. II.

Of the Life of the blessed Virgin Mary, and her seven Petitions to God.

THE Life of the Holy Virgin (from whom the Son of God took Flesh) will afford our Devotion ample Matter of Meditation. You are then to know, Christian Reader, that at the third Year of her Age, she was presented in the Temple a Sacrifice to God; and there remain'd to the Age of Fourteen. What was her Method of Life in that holy Sanctuary, during that Space of Time, we may learn from the Revelations, with which she favour'd a devout Votary of her's: Who (as 'tis believ'd) was the glorious St. *Elizabeth*, whose solemn Festival the Church annually celebrates. Among the Rest the following Particulars are contain'd.

When my Parents (*says our blessed Lady*) had consecrated me in the Temple; no sooner were they departed from me, than I resolv'd in my own Heart to chuse God for my Father: And often and devoutly ruminating what I might do to please God, and render myself agreeable in his Sight, that he might vouchsafe to enrich me with

with his Grace ; I began by taking Care to be instructed in the Divine Laws. But of all the divine Laws which I observ'd in my Heart these three were the first and chief: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, with all thy Spirit, with all thy Strength: Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself: Thou shalt hate thy Enemy.* These I kept in my Mind; and immediately possess'd all the Virtues compriz'd in them: And thus will I have you do. But the Soul can possess no Virtue, that has not a cordial Love for God. For 'tis from this Love that flows the Plenitude of all Grace ; without which no Virtue can enter into, nor remain in the Soul ; but drops away like Water, unless due Hatred be conceiv'd towards its Enemies, that is, Vice and evil Habits. Whoever therefore is desirous of possessing and retaining the Grace of God must dispose their Hearts to Love and Hatred. I will therefore that you follow my Example, and do as I did. I rise constantly at Midnight, and before the holy Altar of the Temple, with all the Desire, Will, and Affection I was capable of, and knew how to practise, I implor'd the Grace of Almighty God to observe those three great Commandments chiefly, and every other Precept of his Law. And thus before the sacred Altar I made the following seven Petitions.

I requested then *First* his Grace, to fulfil the Precept of Charity, that is, to love him with all my Heart, &c.

*The Seven
Petitions
of our B.
Lady.*

Secondly, The Grace necessary to love my Neighbour according to his Will and Pleasure, and to delight in all Things that please him.

Thirdly, His Assistance to hate and shun every Thing displeasing to Him.

B 2

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Humility, Patience, Benignity, and Meekness, and every Virtue that could render me agreeable in his Sight.

Fifthly, That he would make known to me the Time in which that ever blessed Virgin should be born, who was to bring forth the Son of God : And that he would preserve my Sight that I might behold her : My Tongue that I might praise her : My Hands that I might minister to her : My Feet that I might move in her Service : And my Knees that I might adore the Son of God in her Womb.

Sixthly, I implor'd his Grace to obey the Precepts and Direction of the Priest of the Temple.

And *Seventhly*, That he would vouchsafe to preserve the Temple and People in his holy Service.

The Servant of *Christ*, when she heard this, said : O most amiable Lady, was not you full of Grace and every Virtue ? Yes, answer'd the blessed Virgin : Yet know for certain that I thought myself as void of Merit, as full of Guilt, and as unworthy God's Favour as you. For which Reason I continued thus asking for Grace and Virtue. And farther, however you may imagine me to have possess'd all the Grace I was endow'd with, with little or no Pains : Yet be assured that I received no one Grace, Gift, or Virtue from Heaven without immense Labour, incessant Prayer, fervent Desires, profound Devotion, many Tears and much Affliction : Ever saying and thinking to the best of my Knowledge and Power what was most agreeable to him. Nor did I receive any Blessing from Heaven without all this, except the sanctifying Grace by which I was made holy in the

Womb

Womb of my Mother. Know also, *adds She*, that no Grace descends into the Soul, but by Means of Prayer and Mortification. However when once we pay to God all the little Services in our Power, though they are but few; they are of such Efficacy as to attract the Almighty himself into the Soul, and with him the most sublime Gifts. Infomuch that the Soul seems in some Measure to be carried out of itself, and forgets the having done or even said any Thing pleasing to Heaven, and becomes more unworthy and contemptible in its own Esteem than ever. Thus much may we gather from the above-mention'd Revelations.

St. *Hierom* however, in the Account he gives us of her Life, adds: that it was the constant Method of the blessed Virgin to continue fix'd in Prayer from the Morning to the third Hour. From the third Hour to the ninth she employ'd herself in manual Exercises. At the ninth again she return'd to Prayer, nor suffer'd any Thing to interrupt her Devotions till call'd upon by the Angel who attended her, to receive her usual necessary Refection: And even then from his celestial Converse she improv'd in the Love and Service of her beloved Master. She was ever found the first at the sacred Vigils and Watches of the Temple, the most vers'd in the Knowledge of the divine Laws, the most profoundly practis'd in true Humility; the most ready and harmonious in the Royal Psalmist's divine Canticles, the most illustrious in Charity, the most innocently pure, and the most perfect in every Virtue. She was immoveably constant in Goodness, yet was never seen or heard to be morose or peevish at the Failings of her Companions as

were less perfect. Every Word of her's had in it such a singular Plenitude of Grace, that something of Divine appear'd in all she said. She was ever perseverant in Prayer, and the Study of God's Laws: And ever watchful over the Conduct of her Companions that none of them might exceed in Speech, or break out into inordinate Mirth, or disgust each other by Pride or offensive Behaviour. She was ever intent on praising God: And lest the Greetings, which neighbourly Charity oblig'd her to use towards those of her own Station, should in the least diminish the Praise due to God; her perpetual Form of Salutation was: Thanks be to God. Hence the laudable Custom of holy Men in saluting each other, to say, Thanks be to God. The Food administer'd to her by the Hands of the Angel serv'd her for her own Support: And she bestow'd on the Poor the Portions allotted to her by the Priests of the Temple. The Angel was seen daily conversing with her, and obeying her, as if she were his beloved Sister or Mother. Thus St. *Hierom*.

In the fourteenth Year of her Age the blessed Virgin was espous'd to St. *Joseph* by divine Appointment revealed to her Parents, and then she return'd to *Nazareth*: concerning which you may see the particular Circumstances in the Legend of her Birth. Such are the Subjects proper to meditate on, which happen'd before the Incarnation. Consider them well, and take Pleasure in the Contemplation of them, committing them to your Memory with the utmost Affection, and practise them with all Diligence, as Matters of the sublimest Devotion. But let us now proceed to the Incarnation.

C H A P.

C H A P. III.

Concerning the Incarnation of Christ, and the Angelical Salutation of the blessed Virgin.

W H E N the Fulness of Time was come, and the most blessed Trinity had deliberated on the Means of providing for the Redemption of Mankind, by the Incarnation of the WORD: *Christ* resolv'd to take Flesh of the blessed Virgin, through his immense Charity with which he loved Mankind. His Mercy therefore moving him, having especially Regard to the Instances of the Celestial Spirits; when the blessed Virgin was return'd to *Nazareth*, Almighty God call'd to him the Angel *Gabriel*; and said to him: Go to our best beloved Daughter *Mary*, espous'd to *Joseph*, the dearest to us of all our Creatures: And tell her that my Son delights in her Form, and hath chosen her for his Mother. Request her to receive him joyfully: For I have decreed to save Mankind by her Means, and to blot out of my Memory the Injury they have done me.

And here (gentle Reader) let me once more repeat my former Advice: Be mindful and take such Notice of what you read as to render yourself as it were present to every Passage herein related. But particularly in this Place fix God before your Imagination, in the best Manner a corporeal Being is capable of conceiving an Idea of his incorporeal Substance. Conceive him, that is, as a mighty Sovereign, seated on his

awful Throne, the paternal and benign Affability of whose majestick Countenance spoke in him a Disposition towards Reconciliation, or rather Reconciliation itself: Imagine him, I say, thus disposed to utter the above-mention'd Words; while *Gabriel*, with serene and chearful Aspect, prostrate on his Knees in a devout and reverent Posture listens attentive to the divine Embassy. That received, away the Angelick Messenger hastens from the Celestial Regions, and in the borrow'd Dress of human Semblance quick as thought presents himself before the holy Virgin *Mary*, in the inmost Recess of her little Habitation. Yet not so expeditious was his Flight, but that the blessed Trinity, preventing their Embassador, were in the happy Mansion before him.

The Incarnation was a Work of the whole Trinity, or three divine Persons.

For this you must take along with you; that though the Person of the Son alone was made Man, yet the whole sacred Trinity steer'd in his Incarnation. The Father and the Holy Ghost co-operating, not unlike two Persons (to use a familiar Comparison) who on each Side of a Man that puts on a new Vest help him to get it on, by holding up the Sleeves. Here then be specially attentive, and as if present to every Thing that is said and done, endeavour to comprehend every Circumstance passing. Oh, what Scope may not this Subject afford your devout Meditation. What Reflections may you not gather from that little Mansion where such Personages are assembled, and such ineffable Mysteries wrought by them. For though the sacred Trinity be undoubtedly always every where present; yet in this Place at this Juncture, It was present in a more singular and ineffable Manner than usual

usual, on Account of the supernatural and unspeakable Work then and there effected. The Angel *Gabriel* then arrived at the holy Mansion, and entering to the blessed Virgin, thus the faithful Proxy began his Message. *Hail, full of Grace! the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among Women.* To which, not a little disturb'd at the extraordinary Address, she made no Answer. Her Disturbance however proceeded not from any guilty Disorder within her: Neither could it be occasion'd by the Angelical Vision, such Kind of Visits being from their Frequency become familiar to her. But, to speak in the Words of the Evangelist, *She was disturb'd at the Angel's Speech:* That is, puzzled in Thought at the Novelty of this Salutation, so unlike his usual Manner of Greeting her. Nor could the humble Virgin be other than disturb'd at the triple Commendation included in his Angelical Salutation. To hear herself commended, for that she was full of Grace, that the Lord was with her, that herself was blessed above the rest of her Sex, was more than one so rich in Humility could hear without a Blush of Concern. Her Discomposurè then was wholly the Effect of a virtuous and becoming Bashfulness; accompanied with a Fear of too easily giving into the Belief of what she heard. Not that she in the least mistrusted the Angel's Veracity; but because 'tis ever the Faculty of the truly humble to tend to Perfection, by examining into, and magnifying their Defects while they either remain wholly insensible of any Merit in themselves, or see it thro' the lessening End of the Perspective. Thus as becomes a prudent, fearful, and modest Virgin, our blessed Lady remain'd silent, returning no

Answer

Answer to the Angelical Salutation ; as if unknowing what to reply. Learn from her Example the Study and Practice of Silence : A Virtue of the greatest Utility to such as are endow'd with it. The Vice contrary to which is so odious in all, but especially in Women, and more in young Ones and Virgins ; that this sacred Patern of Modesty could not prevail on herself to make any Answer till she had heard the Angel twice utter his mysterious Message ; nor even then could she have resolved to break thro' her wonted Silence, but that the sacred Messenger appriz'd of the Cause of her Despondency encourag'd her in the following Words : Fear not, *Mary*, nor be concern'd at the Encomiums I render you. Why should your Modesty blush to receive the Praises justly due to you ? You are not only full of Grace yourself, but even born to be the Means of restoring all Mankind to the Grace of God, which they had lost. For behold you shall conceive and bring forth the Son of the Most High, who has chosen you to be an Instrument of the Salvation destin'd to all who put their Trust in him. This said the blessed Virgin, waving the Subject of her Praises, was solicitous to know the Manner in which all this could be done : Which she could not but be anxious about on Account of her Virginity, which she was resolv'd never to part with. Wherefore she requested the Angel to acquaint her with the Manner of the Conception, in the following Words : How shall this be effected upon me who have dedicated myself to God in a Vow of perpetual Virginity ? 'Twill be done (replied the Angel) by the singular and ineffable Operation of the Holy Ghost, by
whole

whose Power you will be replenish'd, and conceive without Prejudice to your Virginity : And therefore will your Son be called the Son of God. For nothing is to him impossible. In proof of which know that by the same Power of God your Kinswoman *Elizabeth*, tho' old and barren, is now six Months gone in her Pregnancy of a Male Child.

Here conceive yourself in the divine Presence, and contemplate how the blessed Trinity, graciously waiting the Answer and Consent of their beloved Daughter, were delighted to behold her graceful Decency of Behaviour, and the Comeliness of her Expressions. With what Wisdom and Attention the Angel employs his heavenly Eloquence to persuade her, and with what Sweetness, Reverence, and Affability he bends before her as his awful Mistress, faithfully executing his Embassy, and attentively observing her Words, to reply to them in a Manner becoming her Dignity, his Office, and the Will of the Almighty. And finally with what a becoming Degree of Deportment, mix'd with a graceful Bashfulness of Countenance, she receives the sudden and surprising Message without being elated by it : But attributes wholly to the divine Grace the wonderful Encomiums bestow'd on her, tho' such as were never given to any Mortal besides.

Consider attentively this, and learn from so great a Pattern to behave with Modesty and Humility : Without which Purity itself is of little Signification. But to return to our Subject.

The blessed Virgin, after hearing the fore-mention'd Words of the Angel, with Prudence equal to the rest of her Conduct, gave her Consent : And (as her Revelations declare) kneeling
with

*Chastity
without
Modesty
and Hu-
mility is
of little
Esteem.*

with her Hands join'd in a devout Posture said : *Behold the Handmaid of our Lord : Be it done to me according to thy Word.* In the same individual Instant the SON of GOD pass'd intire into the Virgin's Womb, took Flesh of her, and still remain'd intire in the Essence of his Father. However you may for Piety's Sake imagine, that the *Son of God* undertaking this laborious Embassy of Obedience reclined and recommended himself to the Father, and that in the same Instant his Soul was created and infused into the Womb of his Mother : Where he was at once a perfect *Man* as to all the Parts of his Body, but as to his Life of a very diminute Existence ; so that tho' he afterwards grew in the Womb as naturally as other Children are wont to do ; yet he receiv'd not like them any Increase of Faculties in his Soul, or Diversity in Limbs : Being then as perfect God and perfect Man, as wise and as powerful as he is now. But to return to the Angel : *Gabriel*, to accompany the blessed Virgin in her Devotion, kneel'd awhile, and then, rising, profoundly bent himself to her in a respectful Manner to take his Leave, after which he vanish'd immediately. The blessed Virgin now alone all in Raptures, and more than usually enflamed with the Love of God, began to be sensible of her Pregnancy. Wherefore throwing herself again upon her Knees, she return'd God Thanks for so great a Favour, and with most humble and fervent Instance beseech'd him to vouchsafe her the Instructions necessary to render her capable of acting her Part by her Son free from any Defect or Imperfection.

Meditate then on the Greatness of this Day's Solemnity. Let your Heart rejoice : And the
Day

Day be crown'd with holy Mirth: A Day hitherto unheard of since the Beginning of Time: A Day devoted to the Honour of God the Father, who celebrates the Nuptials of his Son, espous'd to human Nature which he has inseparably united to himself. A Day Sacred to the Wedding of the divine Son, and to his Entrance into the Virginal Womb, thro' which he is to pass into the World. A Day solemn to the Holy Ghost by whose singular and wonderful Co-operation the Work of the Incarnation was effected; and whose extraordinary Benignity, this Day, began to shew itself to Mankind. A Day of Glory to our blessed Lady, who on the same was acknowledged and assum'd by the Father for a Daughter; by the Son, for a Mother; by the Holy Ghost for a Spouse: A Day of Rejoicing to the whole heavenly Choir, on Account of the Work of their Reparation commencing from it; but more especially to Mankind on Account of their Salvation, Redemption, and Reconciliation; for on this Day properly was the whole human Nature exalted and deified. On this Day the Son submitted to the new Command of his Father in the Work of our Salvation: On this Day, coming forth from the highest Heavens, he *exulted like a Giant in the Race*, and center'd in the virginal Garden of his Mother's Womb: On this Day he was made one of us, and becoming our Brother, he begun to sojourn among us. On this Day the true Light descended from Heaven to expel away our Darkness, and disperse the Clouds of our Ignorance. On this Day the Bread of Life, which enlivens the World, was truly perfected, in the sacred Enclosure of the virginal Womb; and the Word

was

was made Flesh to dwell amongst us. *Lastly*, On this Day the long continued Cries of the holy Patriarchs and Prophets were heard, and their fervent Desires fully accomplish'd. They cried aloud, with Earnestness not to be express'd, and said, *Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb, the Ruler of the Earth.* Isa. xvi. *Drop Dew ye Heavens from above, and let the Clouds rain the Just.* Chap. xlv. *Would, O God, thou would'st burst the Heavens asunder, and descend.* Chap. lxiv. *Lord, incline thy Heavens, and descend.* Psal. cxliii. *Shew us thy Face, and we shall be saved.* Ibid. lxxix. These, with infinite others of like Nature (to be seen in holy Writ) were their repeated Instances for the Approach of this solemn Day, which they so ardently expected. This Day gave the first Beginning to every joyful Solemnity; and is the only true Source of all our real Happiness. For though hitherto Almighty God has been justly incensed against Mankind, for the Transgression of their first Progenitors; yet from this Time his Anger against them shall cease at the Sight of his only Son made Man for their Redemption. Hence is this Day so justly stiled the *Fulness of Time*; that is, a Time of *Grace and Redemption* to Man. And hence also may we deem the wonderful Greatness of this most solemn and ineffable Mystery, where all is profitable and sweet, all is gay and decent, all is pleasing and desirable; in a Word, where all is so sublimely sacred that it requires our inmost Devotion to treat of it, our purest Transports to solemnize it, and our profoundest Veneration to adore it. Let such then be the Heads of your Meditation; make them the Scope

of all your Pleasure; and chuse them for your frequent and favourite Amusement. For who knows but the Lord may recompence your pious Practice with more ample Scenes of heavenly Knowledge?

CHAP. V.

Our blessed Lady visits her Cousin St. Elizabeth, in whose House the Magnificat and Benedictus were composed.

OUR blessed Lady, having conceived by the Holy Ghost, and the Incarnation of the Son of God being fully accomplished in her sacred Womb, recalling to Mind what the Angel had told her concerning her Cousin *Elizabeth*, she resolved to visit her; and this not merely to congratulate with her on her happy Pregnancy, but rather to assist her at her approaching Delivery. Wherefore, in Company with her beloved Spouse *St. Joseph*, she immediately set out on her Journey from the little City of *Nazareth*, towards the House of *St. Elizabeth*, which was near *Jerusalem*, and about seventy Miles distant from *Nazareth*. Neither the Length of the Journey, nor the Labours of the Way could deter her from her pious Resolution; but without Delay she went on with all Speed, that she might not appear long Abroad. Nor was She, like other Women in her Condition, in the least burden'd by the divine Infant she bore in her Womb: No, her sacred Load

Load was no Incumbrance to her. And now by the Way accompany in Mind this blessed Couple. The ever-glorious Virgin, Queen of Heaven and Earth, with her beloved Spouse, proceeds on her Journey; not on a pamper'd Horse, or gilded Carr, not escorted by a military Band of arm'd Soldiers, not triumphant amidst a pompous Crowd of Nobles, not surrounded with a glittering Tribe of courtly Damsels. Poverty, Humility, Modesty with every graceful Virtue were all their Train. The Lord of Hosts indeed was her inseparable Companion, attended by his glorious Court far outshining all the Splendour of the vainly pompous Sons of Earth. Come at length to their Journey's End, she enter'd the House of Zachary, and finding there her Cousin *Elizabeth*, saluted her, saying; Hail my dear Cousin *Elizabeth*. *Elizabeth* vehemently animated by the Holy Ghost, with Transports of Joy, strait arose, and tenderly embracing her, cried aloud: *Blessed art thou amongst Women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy Womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord doth come to visit me.* Luke i. The Words of the Salutation were no sooner graciously utter'd by our blessed Lady, than they pierced even to the Bowels of St. *Elizabeth*, inflaming both Mother and Son with the divine Spirit. Nor was the Mother inflamed before her Son, but he, first replenish'd himself, replenish'd also his Parent; not operating any Thing new within her, but rather meriting that something Divine should be wrought within her Soul, by the Operation of the Holy Ghost: Insomuch that the Grace of the holy Paraclete was more abundantly diffused in him, and

and He first was sensible of its blessed Effects. Thus as She outwardly perceived the Presence of the holy Virgin, He inwardly was affected by the Approach of his Lord. Wherefore He exulted for Joy, and She prophesied. Consider hence of how great Force and Efficacy must the Words of the blessed Virgin be, that the Holy Ghost should deign to communicate himself at the bare Utterance of them. For She herself was so copiously filled with Him, that the same divine Spirit in and through her, replenished others. The Virgin *Mary*, after hearing the Salutation of *Elizabeth*, replied thus to her: *My Soul doth magnify our Lord, and my Spirit bath rejoiced in God my Saviour*, with the rest of that divine Canticle. This, ended they both prepare to sit down: When a holy Contention arose between them, not occasion'd by ceremonious Insincerity, but from an inborn Humility. The sacred Virgin greatest in that Virtue, as well as in Dignity, would have seated herself below *Elizabeth*, at her Feet; and *Elizabeth*, conscious of the Majesty of her Guest, would have placed herself beneath her's. But at length, both modestly yielding to each other, they seated themselves together side by side. The pious Debate was succeeded by equally pious Greetings, and mutual interrogations concerning the Mystery of each other's Conception, which each to the other revealed, giving the Glory of it to God, and crowning the Day, with divine Praises and Thanksgiving for the Sovereign and ineffable Blessings received. Our blessed Lady continued with *Elizabeth* the Space of three Months, helping and assisting her as far as she was able, with all Devotion, Humility, and Veneration, seem-

ing to forget the Greatness of her own Dignity, and that she was chosen Mother of God, and the Sovereign Queen of the World. Oh, what a heavenly House; what blessed Chambers! What an immaculate Bed was that, which contain'd such sacred Parents, pregnant with such celestial Infants: *Mary* and *Elizabeth*, *Jesus* and *John*, guarded and attended by those truly great and venerable Men, *Joseph* and *Zachary*. When *Elizabeth's* Time was expired she was happily delivered of a Son, which our blessed Lady received in her Arms, and carefully swaddled, performing with virginal Tenderness the necessary little Offices suitable to the Occasion. The Infant, as if acquainted with the Majesty of his sacred Nurse, fixed his Eyes steadfastly on her, so taken with her Beauty, that when she deliver'd him again to his Mother He still looked towards her as if he could take delight in her alone; while she on the other side continued graciously playing with him, embracing him, and cherishing him with her heavenly Lips. What Excess of Honour was not this for St. *John*! What pure Mortal, besides himself, was ever blessed with such a Nurse? Yet this is not the only great Privilege he enjoy'd. Many others might be named, were they not foreign to our present Purpose.

On the eighth Day the Child was circumcised, and called *John*. Then was the Mouth of *Zachary* open'd, and he prophesied, saying: *Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, &c.* Thus were the *Magnificat* and *Benedictus*, those two sublimely beautiful Canticles, composed in this House. In the mean time, while the latter was singing, our blessed Lady, Virgin like, to avoid being

being gazed on by the Men who were present, on Account of the Ceremony, kept retired in a secret Part of the Chamber, where, unseen, she could hear what pass'd; and there devoutly listen'd to the Prophecies utter'd concerning her divine Son: Carefully and wisely depositing the whole in her Heart. At length, taking leave of *Elizabeth* and *Zachary*, and giving her Blessing to *John*, She returns to her own humble Habitation at *Nazareth*. Here again, devout Reader, contemplate her Poverty in another Shape. She returns Home: But to what Home? To a Home unprovided with Meat or Drink: To a Home destitute of every Necessary of Life. But this were a slender Discomfort, had she either Estate or Money, or other Means to procure her a chearful Residence there. But, alas! that she is a Stranger to. She has remained now three Months with her Relations, probably in no mean Circumstances: And yet now, not with regret, but chearfully of her own accord She retreats to her former State of Poverty, and to gain a narrow Subsistence with her own Hands. Oh, Christian Soul, compassionate such Greatness, in such great Distress: And learn from so great an Example the Poverty of Spirit you ought to have.

C H A P. V.

How St. Joseph thought of dismissing the blessed Virgin; and how God suffers his Beloved to be afflicted.

W H E N our blessed Lady and her Spouse had been some time at Home, and *Jesus* had visibly grown in his Mother's Womb, *St. Joseph* could not but perceive the Pregnancy of this heavenly Parent, which, with the Consciousness of his own Purity, stung his Soul to the Quick with immoderate Grief. If it should seem strange to You that *Christ* would have his Mother espoused, notwithstanding she was to remain always a Virgin; there are three very natural Reasons to be assigned. *First*, That her Pregnancy might not subject her to Infamy. *Secondly*, That the Care and Company of a Man might guard her from Insults. *Thirdly*, That the Veil of Marriage might elude the Devil's Enquiry into the Mystery of the Incarnation.

Joseph then frequently observed his Spouse, but never without Grief and Confusion, nor could he help shewing his Concern in the Disturbance of his Countenance; often turning his Eyes from her as from a Criminal, whom he suspected of Adultery. Hence learn how God permits those, whom he loves, to be afflicted in this Life, and how he prepares them for the Crown of Glory by Means of Temptation.

Amidst

Amidst his Concern, however, he was not so lost to Moderation but that he was contriving how to dismiss her privately, without Hurt to her Person or Reputation. Here it may be truly said that his Praise is in the Gospel: 'Tis there said that He was a *just Man*: And great indeed does his Virtue appear on this Occasion. For tho' commonly speaking the greatest Provocation a Man has to Shame, Grief, and Excess of Madnefs, is the Infidelity of his Wife; yet he knew so well to moderate his Passions by Virtue, that he would not so much as accuse a Wife whom he thought Guilty: But chose patiently to stifle the Injury, and rather to conquer by Goodness, than overcome by Revenge: And being too just not to desire to separate from a Criminal, he was likewise too merciful not to spare the Reputation of one, who was to be pitied if frail.

Nor was our blessed Lady without her Share of Tribulation: She could not but observe his Disturbance; and could not but be disturb'd with it herself. Nevertheless She humbly kept Peace, and conceal'd the Gift of God, rather chusing to be reputed a Sinner than to reveal the divine Secret, and say That of herself which might be discredited as an empty Boast, contrived to palliate a real Offence. All her Recourse was to God, beseeching him to apply his healing Balm of Comfort to the troubled Souls of herself and Spouse. Hence gather what inexpressible Grief and Anxiety these two blessed Personages were in! But the same Lord, who wisely permitted them to be tried, mercifully relieved them both in Time of Need, sending an Angel to *Joseph* in a Dream; to inform him that

that his Spouse had conceived by Virtue of the Holy Ghost, and that he should lay aside all Thoughts of leaving her; and ordering him to distrust her no more but to remain with her in all Love, Peace, and Alacrity. Thus their Disquiet ceasing a sovereign Consolation took Place in their Breasts. And the same would happen to us, if we knew how to arm ourselves with Patience in the Day of Trial: For 'tis a never failing Effect of the divine Bounty to calm the Breasts of such as behave with Courage in the Tempest of Affliction. Nor ought we in the least to doubt it; for He is too tender of his Elect to suffer them to undergo the least Tribulation but what tends to their Advantage.

St. *Joseph* after this enquired modestly into the Particulars of this miraculous Conception, which the humble Virgin faithfully related to him: And he remain'd thenceforward with his blessed Spouse with utmost Joy and Content. Thus both jointly rejoiced in their common Poverty, He taking the tenderest Care of her, and cherishing her with chaste Affection, and She honouring him with modest Confidence and spotless Love.

In the mean Time *Jesus* remain'd enclosed in his Mother's Womb, like other Children during the Space of nine Months, patiently and benignly waiting the due Time. Reflect then and compassionate him, who for your Sake reduced himself to so abject a State of Humiliation. How much then ought not we to endeavour possessing this Virtue! And how little does it become us to follow our Ambition, and to swell with the vain Desire of Reputation and Fame, when the Lord of Majesty condescended to stoop to so humble

a State! Can we ever make a sufficient Acknowledgment to him for this second Proof he gives us, in this tedious Imprisonment, of the Excess of his Love for us? At least let us make him a cordial Acknowledgment of it, and with the utmost Fervour of our Hearts return him Thanks, for having chosen us from among the rest of Christians to make him the slender Retribution of retreating from the Vanities of the World to attend to his Service. 'Tis true we owe it wholly to the Gift of his divine Grace, not to any Merit of ours; and yet he is pleased to look upon it as highly acceptable and grateful. Nor ought a Christian's Retreat to be deem'd a Punishment, but a Safe-guard. For being safely placed within our pious Retirement, the impoison'd Darts, or tempestuous Waves of this profligate World in vain attempt to reach us, unless we rashly approach them. Let us then with all our Power, and with the greatest Purity of Heart, endeavour to enjoy the Blessing, by locking up our Thoughts, and abstracting our Minds from all that is transitory. For little will it avail for the Body to be separated from worldly Commerce, while the Mind or Heart remains attached to it.

Learn likewise to compassionate our Lord *Jesus* for this, that from the Moment of his Conception to that of his Death his Sufferings were continual, inasmuch as he knew that his divine Father, whom he infinitely loved, was and would be dishonour'd and postponed to the meanest of his Creatures; and inasmuch as he saw those unhappy Souls (which were created to his own Likeness, and which he compassionately loved) miserably and almost universally plunge

plunge themselves in their own Damnation. And his Affliction and Torture was so much superior to his bodily Sufferings, as it was the Cause of them. For the Latter he submitted to only to remove the Former. What plentiful and rich Provisions of spiritual Food are here laid before You for Contemplation! Taste them then: And if you wish to relish perfectly the Sweetness of them; partake of them with Frequency, Diligence, and Devotion.



CHAP. VI.

Of the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

THE Term then of nine Months, from the Time of the Conception of our blessed Redeemer, being near expired, an Edict was published by the Emperor *Augustus Caesar*, throughout all his Dominions, whereby he ordered all his Subjects to repair to the respective Places of their Birth, there to have their Names enroll'd. In Conformity to which, *Joseph*, being a Native of *Betlehem*, prepared to go thither: And perceiving that the Time drew near for his beloved Spouse to bring forth her blessed Son, he resolved upon taking her along with them. Here a second Time our blessed Lady undertakes a Fatiguing Journey: The City of *Betlehem* being within five or six Miles of *Jerusalem*, and near seventy distant from *Nazareth*. All they took with them was an Ox and an Ass, with which

which they travelled on in the lowly Appearance of such who deal in that kind of Animals. Come at length to the City of *Betlehem*, they found there so great a Multitude of People who had resorted thither, from all Parts, on the same Occasion ; that by Reason of their extreme Poverty and Distress, they found no Reception for themselves in the Inn. Here let Tenderness excite you to Compassion towards the august Personage of this young and delicate Virgin. Consider her at the Age of fifteen, wearied with the Labours of a tedious Journey, confused, terrified, and abash'd amidst a' crouded Populace ; She seeks, to no Purpose, a Place of Rest ; and, every where refused Admittance for herself and Spouse, is at last reduced to recur for Shelter to a homely Shed, the usual Refuge of Persons surpris'd by sudden Storms of Rain. In this Place we may suppose *St. Joseph*, who was by Profession a Carpenter, might probably have made a kind of Partition, or small Enclosure for themselves, in which he fixed a Rack and Manger for the Conveniency of their Beasts. And now let me earnestly intreat you to be sedulously attentive to every Thing that passes, concerning this Subject, chiefly because what I am now going to relate, I had from a devout and holy Man of undoubted Credit, to whom I believe it was revealed by the blessed Virgin herself.

The expected Hour of the Birth of the Son God being come, on *Sunday* towards Midnight the holy Virgin, rising from her Seat, went and decently rested herself against a Pillar she found there : *Joseph* in the mean Time sat pensive and sorrowful ; perhaps, because he could not prepare the necessary Accommodations for her.

But

But at length he arose too, and taking what Hay he could find in the Manger, he diligently spread it at our Lady's Feet, and then modestly retired to another Part. Then the eternal Son of God, coming forth from his Mother's Womb, was without Hurt or Spasm to her, transferr'd in an Instant from thence, to the humble Bed of Hay that was prepared for him at her Feet. His holy Mother, hastily stooping down, took him up in her Arms, and tenderly embracing him laid him in her Lap ; then thro' Instinct of the Holy Ghost, she began to wash and bathe him with her sacred Milk, with which she was most amply supplied from Heaven : This done, she took the Veil from off her Head, and wrapping him in it, carefully reposed him in the Manger. Here the Ox and the Ass, kneeling down, and laying their Heads over the Manger, gently breathed upon him ; as if endow'd with Reason, they were sensible, that thro' the Inclemency of the Season, and his poor Attire, the blessed Infant stood in Need of their Assistance to warm and cherish him. Then the holy Virgin throwing herself on her Knees, adored him, and rendering Thanks to God, said : My Lord and heavenly Father, I return thee most cordial Thanks, that thou hast vouchsafed of thy Bounty to give me thy only Son ; and I praise and worship thee, O eternal God, together with thee, O Son of the living God, and mine.

Joseph likewise paid him Adoration at the same Time : After which he stripp'd the Ass of his Saddle, and separating the Pillion from it, he placed it near the Manger for the blessed Virgin to sit on ; but she, seating herself with her Face towards the Crib, made Use of that home-

ly

ly Cushion only to lean on. In this Posture the Queen of Heaven remained some time immovably, keeping her Eyes and Affections steadily fixed on her beloved Son. Thus far of the above-mentioned Revelations.

After that our blessed Lady had reveal'd this to her devout Votary, she disappear'd, and there remain'd with him an Angel of God, who spoke many great Things to her sacred Praise; and the same were again related to me, which I have neither Capacity of repeating nor retaining.

You have hitherto, Christian Reader, been present at the sacred Birth of the Son of God, and beheld the happy Delivery of the Queen of Heaven, and may have discovered, in both these Mysteries, the true Practice of strict Poverty, in the extreme Penury and Want of many Things necessary. This most sublime Virtue the Lord of Heaven and Earth first brought to its true Lustre. This is that Evangelical Pearl to obtain which we must spare no Cost, but must purchase it at the Expence of all we have. This is the first and sure Foundation necessary to support the whole spiritual Fabrick. For the Soul being here clogg'd with the Weight of temporal Goods, is thereby render'd incapable of raising itself on high, and freely ascending to God. In relation to this St. *Francis* thus says: You are to know, Brethren, that Poverty is the spiritual Way that leads to Salvation, as it were the nutrimental Sap of Humility, and the Source of all Perfection; the Fruit of which is conceal'd from, and unknown to many. It ought then to be a Subject of Confusion to us that we endeavour not with all our Strength to

em-

embrace it, but on the contrary, load ourselves with the Surcharge of many superfluous and unnecessary Things, when the Lord of Heaven, and the blessed Virgin his Mother, were with the greatest Perfection most strict Observers of it. Hence, St. Bernard says, the Practice of this Virtue is a Jewel which the Facility of obtaining has render'd of little Value in the Esteem of Mankind. The Son of God, being desirous of this Virtue, descended from Heaven among us, that he might become capable of practising it himself, and of rendering it dear to us by the Esteem he set upon it. Embellish thy Heart then as a worthy Sanctuary of thy heavenly Spouse, with the Virtues of a profound Humility and strict Poverty : These are the swaddling Clothes he takes greatest Delight in, and these he prefers (as the blessed Virgin witnesses) to the Mantles of of the richest Brocades. Adorn thy Soul with them, oh Christian Reader ! and make a Sacrifice to God of the Vanity of pompous Attire, better suiting the Pride of *Heathens*, than the humble Profession of *Christians*. Thus far St. Bernard. And again, in his Sermon on the Nativity, he says ; Almighty God at length comforts his People. Would you know who are his People ? Hear then the Man according to God's own Heart : *To thy Care* (says he) *the Poor is committed*, Psal. 9. And as Christ adds in the Gospel, *Wo unto you that are Rich ; for you have received here your Consolation*, Luke 2. And how indeed can they expect from him any Comfort, who have placed their Comfort elsewhere ? The tender Infancy of *Jesus Christ* is no Comfort to the Loquacious and evil Promoters of idle Discourse ; his Tears convey no comfortable

portable Harmony to those who are inclined to inordinate Laughter and trivial Mirth. They, whose Glory is to shine in gay Apparel, receive no Comfort from the Poverty and Meanness of his Attire, nor does his humble Stall, and homely Manger, contribute the least Consolation to such, whose Ambition is to fill the first Seats, and hold the chiefest Dignities in Church or State. The joyful Tidings of the eternal Light, being sprung forth, was first carried to the poor Shepherds, who were carefully watching their Flocks, and it was said, that unto Them a Saviour was born; that is, unto the Poor, the Industrious, and Labouring; not unto You, oh Rich, who lull'd with Ease, and swell'd with Power and Plenty, have here your Fill of Consolation. Thus *St. Bernard*.

In this same Nativity of the Son of God, we may likewise contemplate a most profound Humility which is evidently remarkable, both in the Mother and her blessed Son. They disdain'd not a Stall for their Habitation, a Wad of Hay for their Bed, dumb Creatures for their Companions, with every Thing about them that seemed lowly, mean, and contemptible: Each of them, ever with the greatest Perfection, practis'd this Virtue, and in every the most minute Action of their whole Lives strongly recommended it to us. Let us then, by serious Endeavours, apply ourselves to the Study of it, and be earnestly solicitous of embracing it, because without it there is no Salvation. None of all our Actions can be pleasing to God, if joined with Pride: For, according to *St. Augustine*, Pride was the Occasion of that unhappy Change among the angelical Spirits, transforming them from Angels

gels of Light into Devils ; whereas Humility, raising Mankind above their Nature, transformed them unto the State of Angels. Hence St. *Bernard* makes the following Query : What ought Mankind to be, whose happy Lot is to repair the vacant Seats of the reprobate Angels ? Pride once invaded that heavenly Kingdom, it shook its Walls, and, in great Measure, partly undermined them. What then follows from hence, but that so pestiferous a Vice is become odious to that City, and the worst of all Abominations ? Be assured, Brethren, that he, who spared not the Angels for their Pride, will not fail severely to chastise Mankind : For he never acts inconsistently, but is perfectly conformable in all his Works.

Lastly, Contemplate in this divine Prole and his sacred Parent, but more especially in the Infant *Jesus*, that more than ordinary Anguish which piercingly affected their tender Hearts. Concerning which St. *Bernard* again says : The Son of God being to be born, in whose Power it was to chuse whatever Time he pleased, made Choice of that Time which was most afflicting to Sense and tormenting to Flesh, especially to a tender Infant, the Son of a poor and distress'd Mother, who had scarce Cloaths wherewith to cover him, and no better Cradle than a Manger to lay him in : And notwithstanding the great Necessity there was for them, we find no sort of Mention made of warm Furs, or downy Mantles. And again, *Christ*, who cannot possibly be mistaken, chose that which was most disagreeable to the Flesh : 'Tis a Consequence therefore unquestionable, that this in itself is most eligible,

eligible, most advantageous, and infinitely preferable to all other Things; and whoever should endeavour to persuade, or teach the contrary, ought to be looked upon as no better than a publick dangerous Imposture; and as such be shun'd and avoided by every *Christian*, who places his chiefest Interest in his Salvation. And again, He (says the Saint) was a long Time before foretold by the Prophet *Isaiah*, to be a Child, *That should know how to refuse Evil and chuse Good*, *Isaiah 7*. 'Tis therefore an evident Truth, that the Pleasures of the Flesh are evil, and Afflictions are good; for this, that the eternal Wisdom, and the infant Word in human Flesh, made Choice of the Latter preferable to the Former. Thus far *St. Bernard*. Go thou and do the same from so great an Example: But with Discretion however, so as not to exceed the Bounds of your own Station. Much more might be said concerning these Virtues, but let us now return to the little Mansion of the Nativity.

The Son of God being now born, the innumerable Multitude of celestial Spirits, which were there assisting, paid devout Adoration to their God; and forthwith hastened to the Shepherds, about a Mile distant from *Bethlehem*, and related to them the Birth of our *Lord Jesus*, with the Time and Place when and where it was effected. Thence, with joyful Acclamations, singing Canticles of Praise and Glory, with all Speed they ascend the celestial Regions, carrying to their Fellow-Citizens the same joyful News of their Lord's Nativity. Wherefore the whole Court of Heaven, in Raptures of Joy at the auspicious Tidings, celebrated the sacred
Mystery,

Mystery with utmost Solemnity : And due Thanks being paid to the Almighty Majesty of God the Father, for the great Goodness and Omnipotence he had manifested in this Work, they all successively, according to the different Orders of their heavenly Hierarchy, descend to behold the lovely and gracious Countenance of their Lord, their King, and their God ; and devoutly and reverently adoring him, and rendering all due and profound Respect to the blessed Virgin Mother ; they fill'd the Air with the sweet and melodious Harmony of Canticles of Praise and Thanksgiving to the Almighty. And what one among them, having received the gladsome News, could have remained in Heaven, nor descended obsequiously to visit their Lord thus humbled, thus reduced to the lowest Condition upon Earth ? None of them all could be capable of so great an Arrogance. And therefore the Apostle says ; that *when the Father of Heaven brought his first begotten Son into the World, he said, that all his blessed Angels should worship him*, Heb. 1. This to me is a most pleasing Subject of Meditation at least ; whether it happened exactly as here related or not. To the Angels succeeded the Shepherds, who came in their Turn to pay their homely, but not less welcome Homage ; which done, brimful of that Joy, which the devout Practice of our known Duty inspires, they departed, but not without having first related all that the Angels had said to them. The blessed Parent observing diligently all that was said of her divine Infant, and keeping a pleasing Record of it, within her own Breast. Thou too, O Christian Loiterer ! throw thyself on thy Knees, and in Atone-

ment

ment for thy past Neglects most cordially worship the Lord thy God, devoutly greet his holy Mother, and reverently salute the holy and venerable St. *Joseph*. Then in Spirit tenderly kiss the Feet of the Infant *Jesus*, humbly extended on a Bed of Hay : And earnestly and devoutly request him off our blessed Lady, humbly entreating her to vouchsafe to permit you to take him : Receive him into your Arms, embrace him with tender Affection, attentively contemplate the Sweetness of his sacred Features, and with profoundest Respect salute him often, salute him tenderly, placing all your Confidence in his Goodness, and all your Delight in his Conversation. This you may boldly presume to do tho' a Sinner, because he came into the World to Sinners to work the Salvation of Sinners; and after having a long Time convers'd among Sinners with all Humility and Meekness he made himself the Food of Sinners. His divine Bounty therefore will readily grant you this Favour, as often as your Devotion shall lead you to require it. Neither will he deem it an Effect of your Presumption but a Proof of your Love : Let not his Goodness however lessen the Fear and Reverence with which you ought to approach him; but reflect that he is the Holy of Holies, and aw'd by that Reflection treat him with the Respect becoming him. When you have contemplated him sufficiently, restore him again to his Mother, and learn from her how to serve him. See with what Care, Caution, and prudential Tenderness She executes her Charge, suckles him, nurses him, and performs every other little Office as Occasion requires. Be mindful often to meditate upon these Subjects,

D

take

take a Pleasure and Delight in them, and with all the Devotion you are Master of, endeavour to shew your Desire of aiding our blessed Lady and her divine Infant *Jesus*; often gaze on his amiable Aspect, on that divine Countenance which the Angels themselves covet to behold: But forget not my former Advice to you; let Fear and Reverence temper your Zeal and Devotion lest you meet with a just Repulse, for your own native Poverty, and Meanness ought to render you unworthy, in your own Eyes, the Conversation of so divine and heavenly Company.

It might afford us new Matter of spiritual Joy, were we to contemplate the Greatness of this Day's Solemnity. On this Day was born *Christ*, that is, the Lord's truly ANOINTED. And therefore this is truly the Birth-day of the Eternal King of Heaven, the Son of the Almighty God. This Day *Unto us a Child is born, and unto us a Son is given*, *Isaiah vi.* Also this Day the Son of Eternal Righteousness which before was eclips'd, spread forth the bright Beams of his Mercy and Grace to the World. On this Day the Holy Ghost, Head of the chosen People of God's Church, came forth from the inward Recess of his sacred Bride-chamber, and the fairest in Form of the Sons of Men, graciously unveil'd his lovely and long wish'd for pleasing Countenance. On this Day first was heard that Angelical Hymn *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, &c. This Day, as the Church every where sings, the Heavens distill'd Honey, and the Earth echoes with Angelical Notes. On this Day the Humanity and Benignity of God our Saviour first appear'd among us. On this Day God

was

JESUS CHRIST.

51

was worship'd in the Likeness of sinful Flesh. On this Day were fulfill'd those two wonderful Mysteries surpassing all Understanding, and to be reach'd only by Faith, to wit, God is born, and a Virgin brings forth a Son. On this Day many, almost innumerable, other Miracles were wrought. In a Word, 'twas on this Day, properly speaking, that all that has been said of the Incarnation shone forth in its true Lustre. For whatever was begun before, was not completed nor manifested till now : Wherefore it may not be improper to unite those Passages which seem different in Point of Time, and to make them the Subject of the same devout Meditation. Not without great Reason then, you see, is this Day a Day of publick Rejoicing, of spiritual Mirth, and universal Gladness. To confirm which God was pleased to work the following Miracles in the very Center of *Paganism*. At *Rome* was a celebrated Inn (or Drinking-house) known by the Title of the *Pay-house*, because thither the *Roman* Soldiers used to resort, to air, to regale themselves, and to spend their Pay when they received it ; and here, on the same Day on which *Christ* was born, sprung forth a rich Fountain of precious Oil ; and at the same Time a Circle round the Sun (in Appearance like the Rainbow) was seen in the Heavens and visible to the whole Universe. And the golden Statue which *Romulus*, Founder of the *Roman* State, had erected in his Palace, and which (according to the *Pagan* Oracles was not to fall till a Virgin should bring forth a Son) tumbled down to the Ground and was reduced to Dust. All this came to pass on the very Day and In-

D 2

stant

stant *Christ* was born. In which Place, to the Honour of the blessed Virgin, Pope *Calistus* (in Process of Time) built a Church now call'd St. *Mary's Trans-Tyber*.



C H A P. VII.

Of the Circumcision of our Lord Jesus.

UPON the eighth Day after the blessed Infant was born, he was carry'd to the Temple to be Circumcised, according to the Law of *Moses*. Two great Mysteries were wrought on this Day. The first is, that the blessed Name, through which only Salvation is to be obtained, was this Day made manifest to the World; and our blessed Lord and Saviour publicly call'd by the Name of *JESUS*; which Name had been given him by his heavenly Father from all Eternity, and by the holy Angel before he was conceived. And they call'd his Name *Jesus*; that is, a Saviour. Which Name (as the Apostle says, *Phil. ii.*) is above all Names. *For neither is there any other Name in Heaven given to Men wherein we must be saved*, Acts iv.

This Second is, That on this Day our Lord *Jesus* begun to shed his most precious Blood for our Sakes. So earnest was he to begin early to suffer for us, that He who knew no Sin undertook this Day to endure the Pain of it for Us. Here let Tendernefs move Us to Compassion towards him: Let Us shed at least some few Tears with him, who on this Day shed many

for

for Us. For tho' upon such solemn Days we have Room to rejoyce at our Salvation purchas'd by the Mysteries they commemorate; yet ought we likewise to conceive an inward Sorrow and Compassion, in view of the Anguish and Pain it cost him, by whom they were graciously wrought. We have already seen how many were the Afflictions he suffer'd, together with the great Poverty, Penury, and Distress he underwent, at the Time of his sacred Nativity. But among other Things was this, which hitherto has not been related. His blessed Mother when She had repos'd him in the Manger, having no Pillow with which to raise his Head, made use for that Purpose of a Stone, which not unlikely She might cover with Hay. This I had from a devout Brother who saw it in Spirit: And the same Stone, being now fix'd in the Wall, is a visible Memorial of it. A Cushion or a Pillow, we may piously imagine, would much rather have been her Choice, had She been Mistress of one; but having nothing more proper to answer the End, to the great Affliction of her tender Heart, She was compell'd to make use of That.

We have said before, that on this Day he began to shed his sacred Blood for us, and that indeed in a most severe Manner: For his tender Flesh was cruelly separated with a blunt and edgeless Instrument of Stone. What Pity then ought not this to move us to towards him and his holy Mother? What Tears did not the tender Infant *Jesus* shed at the incredible Pain he suffer'd in the Incision of his sacred Flesh? For his was truly so, and as sensible of Smart as that of any pure Mortal. And can we rea-

The LIFE of

stant *Christ* was born. In which Place, to the Honour of the blessed Virgin, Pope *Calistus* (in Process of Time) built a Church now call'd St. *Mary's Trans-Tyber*.



C H A P. VII.

Of the Circumcision of our Lord Jesus.

UPON the eighth Day after the blessed Infant was born, he was carry'd to the Temple to be Circumcised, according to the Law of *Moses*. Two great Mysteries were wrought on this Day. The first is, that the blessed Name, through which only Salvation is to be obtained, was this Day made manifest to the World; and our blessed Lord and Saviour publicly call'd by the Name of *JESUS*; which Name had been given him by his heavenly Father from all Eternity, and by the holy Angel before he was conceived. And they call'd his Name *Jesus*; that is, a Saviour. Which Name (as the Apostle says, *Phil. ii.*) is above all Names. For *neither is there any other Name in Heaven given to Men wherein we must be saved, Acts iv.*

This Second is, That on this Day our Lord *Jesus* begun to shed his most precious Blood for our Sakes. So earnest was he to begin early to suffer for us, that He who knew no Sin undertook this Day to endure the Pain of it for Us. Here let Tenderness move Us to Compassion towards him: Let Us shed at least some few Tears with him, who on this Day shed many

for Us. For tho' upon such solemn Days we have Room to rejoyce at our Salvation purchas'd by the Mysteries they commemorate; yet ought we likewise to conceive an inward Sorrow and Compassion, in view of the Anguish and Pain it cost him, by whom they were graciously wrought. We have already seen how many were the Afflictions he suffer'd, together with the great Poverty, Penury, and Distress he underwent, at the Time of his sacred Nativity. But among other Things was this, which hitherto has not been related. His blessed Mother when She had repos'd him in the Manger, having no Pillow with which to raise his Head, made use for that Purpose of a Stone, which not unlikely She might cover with Hay. This I had from a devout Brother who saw it in Spirit: And the same Stone, being now fix'd in the Wall, is a visible Memorial of it. A Cushion or a Pillow, we may piously imagine, would much rather have been her Choice, had She been Mistress of one; but having nothing more proper to answer the End, to the great Affliction of her tender Heart, She was compell'd to make use of That.

We have said before, that on this Day he began to shed his sacred Blood for us, and that indeed in a most severe Manner: For his tender Flesh was cruelly separated with a blunt and edgeless Instrument of Stone. What Pity then ought not this to move us to towards him and his holy Mother? What Tears did not the tender Infant *Jesus* shed at the incredible Pain he suffer'd in the Incision of his sacred Flesh? For his was truly so, and as sensible of Smart as that of any pure Mortal. And can we rea-

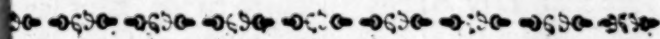
sonably imagine then, that his holy Mother, when she saw her beloved Child in Tears, could contain herself from them? No, we may well suppose, that like a compassionate Parent, she ever accompanied him in all his Afflictions; so that her tender Heart melting now with Grief in seeing him cry, she burst forth into Tears herself, and wept with him. So likewise may we imagine, that more affected with his Mother's Grief than his own, the holy Babe as he lay extended on her Lap waved his little Hands towards her Lips, her Cheeks, and her Eyes, as it were to dry up those precious Drops, and to request her to forbear shedding any more, struggling at the same Time to hide the Excess of his own Torture to mitigate her's. But she, alas, was too sensibly affected with his Sufferings not to shed Tear for Tear with him. Yet the divine Wisdom within her, supplying the Want of Speech in him, enabled her to know his Pleasure, before he had Words to utter it; hence, perceiving that her Grief added to his Pain, often would she try to suppress it, and with Signs of forced Tranquility endeavour'd to console him: Still often would she sigh, and with forbidden Tears, trembling in her Eyes, and waiting as it were in a State of Violence to break their Way, thus frequently would she address him with Complaints of tender distressful Love. Forbear, lovely Babe! forbear those precious Tears, or suffer mine to flow. How can thy loving Mother see those dear Eyes bedew'd and cease to weep? Hence the blessed Infant, in Compassion to his holy Mother, would moderate his Sobs and give over Weeping, and she, with a Mother's Tendernefs, would
wipe

wipe his sacred Eyes and her own, incline her Face to his, closely and tenderly press his blessed Cheeks, and give him Suck ; and study mean while the likeliest Means to lull his Pain and cherish him. In this Manner she behaved as often as she bewail'd himself, which we may reasonably believe he often did after the Nature of other Children.—*First*, To shew the miserable Weakness and Wretchedness of Man's Condition, whose Nature he had truly assumed. And, *Secondly*, to conceal himself from the Devil, that he might not as yet know him to be God : For this Reason the holy Church, alluding to him in Part of her Service, sings : *The tender Infant, as he lies in the cold Manger, shakes and cries.*

From this Time, indeed the Circumcision of the Flesh was abolished, and its Obligation ceased, Baptism being instituted in its Place, which is a Sacrament of more extensive Grace and less repugnant to Nature, as being void of Pain. And yet, Gentle Reader, the Practice of spiritual Circumcision ought still to remain in Force, which consists in divesting ourselves of all that is superfluous, and embracing a true Poverty of Spirit. He, and he only is in Truth spiritually circumcised, who is truly poor. This, says St. Bernard, the Apostle teacheth us in few Words, *Having Food and Raiment, let us be content therewith*, 1 Tim. vi. In a Word, our spiritual Circumcision must appear in all our Senses. Let us then shew we are indeed spiritually circumcised, by renouncing (as much as our present State of Nature will admit) the Use of our Sight, of our Hearing, of our Taste, of our Touch, but above all our Speech. Loquaciousness

cioufness is a very great Vice, odious to God and Man, and ever attended with fatal ill Consequences. We must therefore shew ourselves circumsised in Speech; by speaking seldom, and never but to good Purpose: To speak much is a sure Sign of Levity. On the contrary, Silence is a noble Virtue, and not without great Reason especially recommended to religious Persons. Concerning this Subject *St. Bernard* says thus: He is truly qualified to speak who has first learn'd to be silent: For Silence is the only proper Noriture of Speech. And again in another Place: 'Tis ever the Faculty of weak Judgments to be rashly forward in speaking, for the hasty Conceptions of a light Fancy are always as hastily deliver'd by an unbridled Tongue: Wherefore, says *St. Bernard* on the same Subject: Who does not know how greatly Man is defiled by the Mire dropping from his own Tongue; that is, by his idle Discourse, by the Falshoods he advances, by Slander, by Flattery; in a Word, by almost all his Conversation checquer'd with Malice and Vanity? To restrain all which, he stands in great Need of Silence; a Virtue which is as it were the Sentinel of religious Hearts, and their chief Safe-guard against Irreligion and Indevotion. So dangerous is too much Talk, even to Lay-men, according to *St. Bernard*. But much more (if we believe him) is it so to the Clergy. Hear what he says elsewhere in Relation to Them, Idleness, says he, is the Mother of idle Jokes, and consequently a barbarous Step-mother to Virtue. 'Tis innocent Jokes are Trifles in the Mouths of Lay-men, but all ludicrous Discourse is unseem-

in the Mouths of Clergy-men. Priests may sometimes take a Joke, but should never indecently return it. 'Tis unworthy their Dignity to defile, with such Kinds of Discourse, those Lips which are dedicated to, and consecrated by the Holy Gospel which they pronounce.



C H A P. VIII.

Of the Epiphany, or Manifestation of our Lord Jesus.

ON this Day, which is the twelfth after the Nativity, our Lord *Jesus* vouchsafed to make himself known to the *Gentiles*, in the Person of the three Kings. Render yourself present then, pious Reader, to every Circumstance herein related concerning this holy and solemn Festival: For you are to understand, that no other Festival in the holy Church hath such Diversity of Service in its Antiphons, Lessons, Responses, or whatever else belongs to its Celebration as this has. Not that it is Greater or more Excellent than all other Festivals, but only that on this Day many Things, both great and wonderful, were wrought by our Lord *Jesus*, which chiefly regard the State and Condition of the Church itself.

First then, The Church, which is gather'd from the *Gentiles*, was on this Day received by *Christ Jesus*, in the Person of the three Kings. For on the Day of his Nativity he had manifested himself to the Shepherds, as Representatives of the

the *Jews*, from whom (a small Number excepted) he met with no Reception. But on this Day he appear'd again, and made himself known to the *Gentiles*, by whom he was immediately acknowledged and received, and from Them it is that we are descended, who now form the Church of God's chosen People. Wherefore this Day ought specially to be kept as a most solemn Feast in the Church of God, and celebrated with great Pomp, and Hearts full of Joy, by all good and pious *Christians*.

Secoudly, This Day, nine and twenty Years after his Nativity, our Lord *Jesus* was baptized; by which Mystery he spiritually wedded and truly espoused his holy Church and united it to himself. And therefore on this Occasion is joyfully sung: *Hodie cælesti Sponso juncta est Ecclesia*, &c. *This Day the Church is wedded to her heavenly Spouse*. For in our Baptism, which receives all its Efficacy from That of *Christ*, our Souls being cleansed from the Stain of Sin, and newly cloathed with Grace, are truly espoused and wedded to him, and the Congregation of Souls, thus baptised, constitute the Church of God's chosen People.

Thirdly. On the same Day, a Year after his Baptism, he wrought his first Miracle at the the Marriage-Feast, converting Water into Wine, which, by Allegory, may be likewise taken for the spiritual Marriage between him and his Church. It is probable likewise, that on the like Day our Lord *Jesus* wrought that other wonderful Miracle of multiplying the Loaves and Fishes. However the Church on this Day only celebrates the Three first of these Mysteries.

Consider hence in how great Veneration and Esteem this Day ought to be held, upon which our Lord *Jesus* chose to work so many and such ineffable Mysteries. The Holy Church therefore mindful of the many Benefits and extraordinary Favours conferr'd upon her this Day, by her divine Spouse, to shew her grateful Sense of them, rejoyces, sings, and solemnizes the same with Praise, Thanksgiving, and utmost Magnificence.

But as the solemn Institution of this Festival was chiefly to commemorate the Mystery of the *Epiphany*; we will therefore proceed to a farther Contemplation of the same, and defer meditating on the others till we shall treat of them in their proper Place, according to the Order in which they happen'd. And even concerning This (that is) the Coming of the three Kings to *Christ* our Saviour; my Design here is not to take any Notice of those learned Comments and moral Expositions which many holy Men, with great Pains and Industry, have made on that Subject. Wherefore for the Manner of the *three Kings* coming from the *East* to *Jerusalem*, for what pass'd between them and *Herod*; for whatsoever relates to the Star that conducted them thither, or to the Matter and Meaning of their different Offerings, and other Things of this Kind, I remit you to the Holy Gospel, and to the Expositions of holy Men on those Heads; for as I said in the Beginning of this Work, my Intention, as well in this, as in all other Passages, which occur in the Life of *Christ*, is only to set down some few Meditations, according to such devout Conceptions as a pious Mind is capable of forming,

ing, in Relation to those Things, which either happen'd in Fact or might have happen'd, according to reasonable Conjecture. But it was by no Means my Purpose to act the Office of an Expositor; *First*, because I am unequal to the Task; and *Secondly*, for that it would prove too copious a Subject for one Man to comment upon. Be mindful then with redoubled Attention, to render yourself present as it were to every Particular here treated. For in this, as I mention'd, consists the whole Force and Efficacy of these Meditations.

The three Kings therefore being come to *Bethlem*, with a great Multitude of People, and a noble Retinue, stopp'd, as the Star directed them, at the little Hut in which our Lord *Jesus* was born. The blessed Virgin, hearing the tumultuous Noise of many People, snatches up her blessed Son *Jesus* in her Arms, and in that Moment the three Kings entering the little Mansion, as soon as they beheld the holy Babe *Jesus*, threw themselves on their Knees to adore him. Thus prostrate in a devout and reverent Posture they honour'd him as their King, and worship'd him as their God. Reflect how great and lively their Faith must be! What in reality did then appear that could excite them to believe, that a poor tender Infant, in the Arms of as poor a Mother, dejected, meanly cloath'd, in a despicable Cottage without Furniture, without Company, without Attendants, could be really a King, could be truly their God? And yet such was their Faith, that they believed Both, in spite of all that their Senses had to offer in Opposition. Such were the Guides, such the first Leaders which Heaven

thought

thought proper to give us, and such the great Originals it behoves us to copy after.

After they had devoutly paid this Homage to our blessed Redeemer, and duly honour'd his holy Mother, remaining still on their bended Knees before him, we may piously imagine that they now began to Discourse with the holy Virgin, and to ask many Questions concerning her beloved Son, which they might do either by the Help of an Interpreter or by themselves, since, as they were Men of great Wisdom and Learning, they were probably sufficiently vers'd in the *Hebrew* Language. They therefore submissively request her to acquaint them with the particular Circumstances relating to the holy Babe and herself. The blessed Virgin relates to them, and they readily believe all she tells them. Observe reverently, how awfully they address her and listen to her by Turns. Mark too with what graceful Majesty, mix'd with a becoming Modesty, the sacred Queen of Virgins returns the necessary Replies ; neither forward to talk, nor desirous to be seen. Yet God on this Occasion endow'd her with more than usual Resolution to support her Dignity in the Presence of these princely Votaries, as they personated the whole Church, which he afterwards was to and did establish. Here again contemplate our Lord *Jesus*, who, not yet pleased to speak with benign and pleasant Aspect, fixes his Eyes upon them, and with Gravity becoming his full Maturity of Judgment attentively observes them, full well apprized of all that passes. And what Pleasure must not they admiring Princes conceive, in beholding Him, the Fairest and the most Beautiful among the Children of Men! and to behold

behold him not merely with the Eyes of the Body, but with a kind of mental Intuition, as Men inwardly taught and enlighten'd by the Object they gazed on. Thus replenish'd with Joy and Consolation, at length they made their Offerings to him in the following Manner, Opening their Coffers and spreading a Carpet at the Feet of our Lord *Jesus*, they humbly kneeling down before him, and laying their Treasures at his Feet, devoutly offer'd to him the precious Gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh in great Abundance, but more especially of Gold. We may reasonably suppose, that the Gifts of these three Kings were both great and rich, and that the Gold might exceed all the rest in Quantity and Bulk; for had their Offerings been but small and of little Value, 'twould have been a needless Trouble for them to have open'd their Treasures (as the Gospel says they did) when their Servants, who were near at Hand, might have help'd them to what they wanted, more readily and with less Trouble.

When they had compleated their Offerings, and laid their precious Treasures before him, they reverently prostrated themselves and devoutly kiss'd his sacred Feet. And why may not we piously imagine that the blessed Infant, full of divine Wisdom, the more to comfort them, and settle their Affections on him, tender'd them his divine little Hand to kiss; and bless'd them with it. After this they submissively inclined to our blessed Lady, and taking Leave of her and St. *Joseph*, with Hearts full of Joy and Comfort, they return'd again (as the Gospel says) into their native Country by another Way.

But

But what think we, did the blessed Virgin with those Gifts, or how can we suppose she employ'd so great a Quantity of Gold and other valuable Presents? Did she, think you, hoard them up for her own or her divine Son's Use? Did she lay them out in the Purchase of Lands or Houses? No, She was too much in Love herself with virtuous Poverty, and knew too well the Will of her blessed Infant, for that their inward Communication of Souls, as well as every little outward Gesture left her no Room to doubt of his Contempt of Riches. What Use then could she make of them? — What Use? — The best and only virtuous Use that can be made of earthly Riches. In a Word, she distributed them in few Days time to the Poor: Of so little Estimation, nay, so burdensome and offensive in the Sight of *Christ* and his Mother, are the Treasures of this World and the Pride of Kings! Nay, our blessed Lady so intirely disposed of the Whole, that at her Entrance after into the Temple, to present her Child, she had not wherewith to purchase a Lamb for his Ransom (as the Law directed) but offer'd a Pair of Turtles for him, the usual Offering of the Poor. Thus is it consonant with Reason, both to admire the magnificent Devotion of the Wise Men in the Nobleness of their Offerings; and to adore the exalted Charity and Love of Poverty of the Queen of Heaven, in her Distribution of them to the Indigent.

You have here, gentle Reader, before your Eyes, the truest and best Commendation that can be given to Poverty: Concerning which two Things are especially worthy your Observation.

vation. *First*, *Christ* our Saviour. and his holy Mother the blessed Virgin, disdain not to receive Alms, like necessitous Persons. *Secondly*, They were so far from being solicitous to attain Riches or anxious to hoard them, that they would not so much as keep what was liberally bestow'd upon them; encreasing daily in the Love and Desire of Poverty. But have you yet made any Reflection on the profound Humility that appears in them on this Occasion? Surely, if you recollect you cannot but perceive a most perfect Example of it. We daily meet with many; who in their own Eyes are very mean; and not rais'd by any Opinion of Merit they experience in themselves; yet are wholly unwilling to appear such in the Eyes of others, and cannot easily bear to be contemn'd by any, to have their Faults disclosed, or that the Meanness of their poor Condition should be made publick; lest it might draw upon them the Scorn and Disesteem of the World. But this is not the Example which our Lord *Jesus* gives them this Day, who, tho' the supreme Lord and Master of all Things, would have his Poverty expos'd to all, and his low Condition to appear openly to others; and this not to a few only, or to such as were poor and distress'd like himself, but even to Numbers of rich and noble Personages, to Princes, and Kings, and to their numerous Retinue. Nay, and this at a Time of no little Danger. For they who came from so remote and distant Countries in search of the King of the *Jews*; whom they believed to be God and Lord of all Things, finding him in so poor and humble a Condition, might thence have imagin'd themselves grossly deluded,

and

and therefore return'd Home without either Faith or Devotion. But this hinder'd not our true Lover of Humility from giving us so rare an Example, that we might learn from him never to neglect the true Practice of that Virtue under the specious Pretext of some fancied Good. But that we should learn to be solicitous of appearing contemptible, not only to our own, but even to the Eyes of others.



C H A P. IX.

How the blessed Virgin remain'd at the Crib till the full Term of Forty Days was expired.

AFTER the three *Kings* had perform'd their Offerings, and were return'd again on their Way to their own Country ; the holy Virgin, with her blessed Son *Jesus*, and the venerable St. *Joseph* her beloved Spouse, remain'd still in the humble Stall of *Bethlem*, waiting with Patience in that poor and little Mansion till the full Term of forty Days was compleated as the Law directed for Purification: As if She had been full of Sin and defiled by her Child-bearing as others of her Sex are, and the Child *Jesus* only a sinful Man and not God, and therefore under an Obligation of complying

E

with

with the strict Observance of the Law. But because they would enjoy no special Prerogatives above others, they voluntarily submitted to the Law made for others. This is not the Practise of many, who, conversing among the rest of Mankind, claim to themselves undue Titles to certain Prerogatives above others, and seek to be singularly distinguish'd from them, contrary to the Dictates of true Humility.

Our blessed Lady then, like the other Women, remain'd all the while contented, expecting the before-mention'd Day on which She was to enter into the Temple. During this Space of Time She was studiously watchful, and diligent in the Care of her blessed Son. And oh most gracious God, how great indeed may we devoutly imagine was her Solitude, and with what Attention did she look after him, lest any Thing should trouble or molest him! With what Caution mix'd with timorous Respect did she officiate about him whom she knew to be her Lord and Sovereign God, nevertaking him from or replacing him in the Manger, but on her bended Knees! With what unspeakable Pleasure, Confidence, and motherly Tendernefs would she embrace him, often kiss him, and, sweetly pressing him, take inexpressible Delight in him. How often did she inspect with a kind of innocent and pleasing Curiosity, his blessed Countenance and graceful Form! How discreetly was she us'd to bind and swathe his tender Limbs! For as she was profoundly practis'd in true Humility, so was she also thoroughly instructed in true Wisdom. Wherefore she took special Care to perform with greatest Diligence

every

every minute Office or Duty belonging to her Charge in Regard to Him, not only during his Infancy but after. Oh with what a free and willing Mind did she ever give him Suck ! And the Pleasure she then conceived in suckling so divine a Babe could not but surpass that of the rest of her Sex. *St. Bernard* farther adds : That it is not improbable but that *St. Joseph* often took Delight in caressing the Infant *Jesus*, and devoutly cherishing him on his Knee. Let us now accompany in Spirit the blessed Virgin at the Manger, and take a Pleasure in the pious Meditation of our Lord the Infant *Jesus*, from whom there ever flows a Plenitude of divine Grace. For every devout and pious Soul, from *Christmas* to the Purification, ought with profound Respect and joyful Transports, at least once a Day, mentally to visit our blessed Lady, and to adore her divine Son *Jesus* on her Knee, piously and affectionately meditating on the Poverty, Humility, and ineffable Goodness of both.



CHAP. X.

*Of the Purification of our blessed Lady,
or Candlemas-Day.*

NOW when the Fortieth Day was come, which was prefix'd by the Law for Purification, the blessed Virgin, with her Son *Jesus*, and St. *Joseph*, set out from *Betlehem* on their Journey to *Jerusalem*, about six Miles distant, there to present her blessed Child in the Temple, as it is written in the Law. Let us here accompany the holy Travellers on their Journey, in devout Contemplation, and help the sacred Virgin to bear her lovely Charge, the Infant *Jesus*; and with redoubled Earnestness and Attention be inwardly intent, and as it were present, to every Thing that is here said or done, being real Subjects of the sublimest Devotion.

Thus then do they bring the Lord of the Temple to the Temple of the Lord. At the Entrance thereof they bought a Pair of Turtle-Doves, or two young Pigeons to offer to God for him, as was the Custom of other poor People. But as their Circumstances were low, we may rather suppose that their Offering consisted only of two Pigeons, which were of a less Price than the Doves; and for that Reason are mention'd the last in the Law. And the holy Evangelist takes no Notice here of a Lamb, which was the usual Offering of the Rich. At this Time the holy *Simeon*, who was a Man both

just and devout, being led by the divine Spirit, came into the Temple to see *Christ* the Son of God, whom he had long before desired to behold, and whom the Holy Ghost had promised he should see before his Death. Wherefore coming with speed to the Temple he no sooner beheld the divine Babe than he prophetically knew him, and with bended Knees adored him in his Mother's Arms. The holy Infant blessed him; and looking earnestly upon his Mother bended forwards, making Signs to go to him. The holy Virgin full of pleasing Surprise, understanding his blessed Will, gave him immediately to *Simeon*, who with extatic Joy, and Reverence becoming his Distance, received him in his Arms, arose, and blessing God, said: *Now thou dost dismiss thy Servant, O Lord, according to thy Word in Peace, because mine Eyes have seen thy SALVATION, &c. Luke ii.* prophesying many Things concerning his sacred Passion. And holy *Anna*, the Prophetess, at that Instant, likewise coming into the Temple, gave Thanks to God, adored the Child *Jesus*, and spoke many Things relating to him, and the Redemption that should be wrought by him to all Mankind. These Things raising great Admiration in the Mind of the holy Virgin, she made a secret Record of them, and safely deposited them in her Heart. At length the holy Infant stretching forth his Arms towards his Mother was again deliver'd to her. After this they proceed forwards towards the Altar, in Manner of Procession (which is annually represented on *Candlemas-Day*, throughout the whole Church, by the Blessing of Candles). First went the two venerable old Men,

Joseph and Simeon Hand in Hand, with Transports of Joy and spiritual Mirth, repeating and singing: *Give thanks unto the Lord for he is good, and his Mercy endureth for ever, &c. Psal. cxvii. The Lord is faithful in all his Words, and holy in all his Works, &c. Ibid. cxlvii. For this God is our God, without End he shall be our Guide for ever, &c. Ibid. xlvii. We have received, O Lord, thy Mercy in the Midst of thy Temple. Ibid.* These were followed by the sacred Virgin herself, bearing her blessed Son in her Arms, accompanied by the holy Widow Anna the Prophetess; who, full of unspeakable Joy, walked with profound Reverence and Devotion close by her Side, rendering all Praise and Thanksgiving to God. These then were all that form'd this Procession, which, though consisting of few Persons, represented notwithstanding most great and wonderful Mysteries. There were present of every Sex and every State, Youth, Cælibacy, Marriage, and Widowhood. Being come to the Altar, the holy Virgin kneeling down, with profound Reverence and Devotion, offer'd her dearest Son to his heavenly Father, saying: Vouchsafe, oh most sovereign Lord, to receive thy beloved Son, whom, according to the Appointment of thy divine Will, and to fulfil the Precepts of thy holy Law, I here prostrate offer unto you as the first-born of his Mother. But I beseech thy Mercy, most gracious Father, to vouchsafe again to restore him me, and then rising she laid him upon the Altar. Oh, great God, and most merciful Lord, what a precious and most acceptable Offering was this! 'Twas surely such as had never before been

been made from the Beginning of Time, nor will ever be again.

Behold here, and attentively consider how the blessed Infant *Jesus* quietly remains upon the Altar, like another Infant, and with serene and pleasing Aspect beholding his Mother, and the rest who stand about him, humbly waits with Patience to see what is farther to be done. Then came forth the Priest of the Temple, and the Sovereign Lord of all Things was again redeem'd with the low Price of five Pence, or five small Pieces of Coin called Shecles, as was the Custom to pay for other poor Children : Which after *Joseph* had paid to the Priest, the blessed Virgin joyfully received him again into her Arms : And taking from *Joseph* the above-mentioned Pair of Turtles, she kneel'd down, and, lifting up her Eyes devoutly to Heaven, offer'd them, saying : Oh ! eternal Lord, and most gracious Father of Heaven, vouchsafe I beseech thee to accept this Offering, and first little Gift which your beloved Son of his extream Poverty presents unto you. Then He stretching forth his Hands towards the Doves, and lifting up his Eyes to Heaven, though he said nothing, yet with pleasing Countenance gave most expressive Signs of offering them together with his Mother : And thus she left the Birds upon the Altar.

Consider here, Christian Reader, and earnestly behold the great Dignity and Majesty of those who make this Offering : That is, the blessed Virgin Mother, and her divine Son *Jesus* : And let us imagine whether this little Offering made by such Persons could possibly be rejected by God ? No, rather may we de-

voutly suppose it to have been carried up to Heaven by the Hands of Angels, and there presented by them, to have been most gratefully accepted by the Almighty God, with loud and earnest Jubilies of the whole celestial Court.

After the Offering was ended, the holy Virgin, with her Son *Jesus* and St. *Joseph*, departed from the City of *Jerusalem*, in order to return home again to the little City of *Nazareth*, their native Place of Abode. But the sacred Virgin, being desirous once more of seeing St. *John* before she left those Parts, by the Way she visited a second time her Cousen St. *Elizabeth*. Go thou with her withersoever she goes, and in devout Meditation assist her in carrying her lovely Babe. When our blessed Lady and St. *Elizabeth* met together they were extreamly overjoy'd at the Sight of each other, but more especially in beholding each their blessed Sons, *Jesus* and *John*, who with no less Tokens of Joy lovingly congratulated together: And St. *John*, as tho' conscious of the Dignity of his sacred Guest, behaved towards *Jesus* with utmost Submission and Respect. When they had rested there some few Days, they again prepared for their Journey; and departed thence for *Nazareth*. And here, devout Reader, if from what has already been said, you wish to learn the Poverty and Humility they practised, you need only consider the Poverty of their Offering, the Humility in his Ransom, and the strict Compliance in both with the Precepts of God's holy Law.

C H A P. XI.

Of Christ's Flight into Egypt.

NOW as the Parents of holy *Jesus* were proceeding on their Journey to *Nazareth*, unapprised of the Designs of Heaven, and of the treacherous Machinations of *Herod* against the Life of the divine Infant, the Angel of God appear'd in a Dream to *Joseph*, warning him to retire with the Babe and its Mother into *Egypt*; for that the merciless Tyrant was bent upon the Destruction of the Child. Upon this *Joseph*, immediately rising, ran to awake the blessed Virgin, and inform'd her of the Angel's Warning: Who, shock'd to the very Soul by this Alarm, suddenly arose, and without a Moment's Delay prepared to escape, resolving to neglect nought that might contribute to the Safety of her beloved Son: And accordingly both set out with him that very Night, by a private Way towards *Egypt*. Here follow them in Meditation: Behold how they snatch up the sleeping Infant: Compassionate their Distress: And reap the Benefit of the many pious Remarks that may here be made.

And first, consider the many Vicissitudes our Saviour went thro' of Prosperity and Adversity. And when the like Changes shall happen to you learn to bear them with the manly Patience becoming his Followers: Whenever you see before you a steep Ascent: Be not dismay'd, for know that the Labour of climbing will but enhance

hance the Sweets of Repose you are afterwards to breathe. Thus *Christ* was no sooner born than glorify'd by the Pastors as God, and yet how soon after was he circumcised as if a Sinner? Thus was he honour'd with the Homage, Visit, and Presents of the *Eastern* Monarchs, yet humbled to the Association with Beasts in a homely Stable, with no other Comfort than that of Tears which the meanest Beggar's Child had in common with him. Thus too was He solemnly presented in the Temple, and extoll'd by the prophetical Predictions of *Simeon* and *Anna*, who is now warn'd by an Angel to depart like a Fugitive from his native Country to *Egypt*. Many other Instances of the like Nature you may find in the Life of *Christ*, from which, with a little virtuous Industry, you may reap the greatest Benefit and Instruction. Learn then to curb the Transports of Prosperity by reflecting that it is, in general, but the Forerunner of Adversity. And be firm in Tribulation, in view of the Tranquillity and Happiness that are to succeed them. For 'tis the Dispensation of Providence to chequer Afflictions with Intervals of Pleasure, the better to nourish our Hope, and preserve us against being borne away by a too tedious Tide of Troubles; and to intersperse Tribulations amidst our Felicity, that we may not be elated by it, but remain always in Fear from the Consciousness of our miserable Condition. All this did our Lord for our Instruction, and to conceal himself from *Satan*. Lose not the Benefit of it for want of reflecting thereon.

Secondly, Be mindful that He, who enjoys Benefits and Prosperity from the Gift of God, has no Right to prefer himself to those who are not blest

blest alike : And such as are less profusely favour'd with them ought not to be dejected, or envious in view of such as are more so. This I take Occasion to observe from the Angelical Visit which was paid to *Joseph*, not to his blessed Spouse *Mary*, though she was so much superior to him. So when we find St. *Joseph*, though so eminent in the Sight of God, favour'd but in a Dream with an angelical Visit which were so much more to be coveted in the full Enjoyment of the Senses ; we should learn not to be ungrateful to God for the Gifts of his Bounty, by murmuring when they are not so extensive as our Desires.

Thirdly, Consider that it is by the special Permission of the Almighty that the Elect are harass'd by Troubles and Persecutions. It was doubtless no small Affliction to the Parents of *Jesus* that his Death was sought after. For what more perplexing News could be brought to them ? 'Tis true they knew him to be the Son of God : But that was not sufficient to ward the inferior Part from Despondency. Why (might they not have said ?) Why, O Lord, since thou art Almighty, should it be necessary to fly with thy Son into *Egypt* ? Art not thou powerful enough every where to preserve us unhurt ? Why should we be reduced to the painful Necessity of fleeing from our native Land to a distant unknown Country, through rough and dangerous Ways ? Add to this that the divine Infant was in an Age too tender seemingly for so laborious a Journey, being yet but two Months old : And his Parents unfit for the Fatigues as well as Dangers of the Road ; the one on Account of her being so young, the other by Reason

son of his Age, and both, for Want of Necessaries to travel with, which their extreme Poverty denied them. If these were not Matters of excessive Affliction, what is so? Do you therefore, when in Tribulation, arm yourself with Patience, nor expect from your divine Master those Privileges which he reserv'd not for his Mother or himself.

Fourthly, Consider his ineffable Benignity. How soon and how patiently does he submit to Persecution for your Sake, and to Banishment from his own Country, rather chusing meekly to fly the Tyranny than punish the Tyrant, more solicitous to prevent the Commission of a Crime than to exercise his Vengeance on the Criminal. Oh how profound is this Patience and Humility! He will neither do Injuries nor return them; and therefore meekly contents himself with avoiding the Consequences of them! Thus does it behove us to behave in Regard to such as abuse, ill-treat, or persecute us. Instead of making a like Return, instead of loading them with the Effects of our Vengeance, let us bear them with Patience, and endeavour to avoid the Rage of their Malice; nay, let us pray for them, and return them Good for their Evil, after the Example which our divine Master has elsewhere set us.

In fine, our Lord submitted to flee from the Face of his Vassal, his Servant, his Slave, nay, from a Devil incarnate. In this Journey he was borne along by his Mother in her tenderest Youth, and by St. *Joseph* a feeble old Man, thro' a wild, rough, pathless, unfrequented, tedious Length of Road to *Egypt*, which requires a Fortnight's Post for a Courier to perform,

form, and they perhaps were some Months in compassing it. For, if we may credit Tradition, they cross'd that Desert in which the Children of *Israel* remain'd forty Years. And what Hunger and Thirst must they not endure before the End of their Journey? For how should such poor and feeble Persons be able to carry with them the Supply of Provisions necessary for so long a Progress? And if they did not, where should they be supplied in so trackless and uninhabited a Wilderness? And where, think you, could they find a Shelter from the Hardness of the Ground, and the Inclemency of the Air, to repose themselves by Night, amidst a Waste, where Houses might seem useless for want of Inhabitants. Compassionate therefore these illustrious Sufferers who must doubtless labour under many, mighty, and tedious Difficulties and Hardships as well themselves as the divine Babe they carried with them: Accompany them in Mind, and share with them the heavy Toil of carrying the blessed Infant, and wish to alleviate as much as possible their excessive Fatigues. Grudge not to bear a little Affliction and Penance for yourselves, since so much has been borne for you by others, by such considerable Personages, nay, and so many Times. I shall not give you, pious Reader, any Detail of what happen'd to them on their Way to *Egypt*, as nothing certain can be related of it. All we can depend upon is, that, at their Arrival in *Egypt*, all the Idols in the Country fell in Pieces. They travell'd as far as *Heliopolis*, and there, renting a little Cottage, dwelt for seven Years in the Place, in the Quality of poor, indigent, homeless Strangers.

And

And here, devout *Christian*, we enter into an ample and beautiful Field of pious and tender Meditation: And therefore attend diligently to the following Reflections. Whence and by what Means could they procure even a homely Subsistence for so long a Space of Time as they remained in this Country? Did they content themselves, think you, with the idle Occupation of Begging? No. We are inform'd by several sacred Writers, how ingenious as well as industrious our blessed Lady was at her Needle and Spinning, and that she was extremely assiduous in working for the Support of her beloved Son and Spouse. They were all constant Lovers of Poverty from the Beginning, and continued so to the End of their immaculate Lives. Now may we not suppose that she was reduced to go from House to House to solicit for Work? For how should the Neighbourhood know either her Wants or Inclination to be employ'd, without her doing so? And yet what Reluctance must not this Pattern of Modesty feel in being obliged to expose her virginal Bashfulness to the loose Looks of curious and shameless Gazers, by going Abroad! Which nevertheless we may conceive she could not avoid doing, without taking her beloved Spouse and Help-mate from his Labours, who, no doubt, was busy on his Side in earning as much as old Age would permit him, to aid his sacred Spouse to support the blessed *Jesus*, till he came to an Age to lessen their Labour by his own. Indeed when he came to the competent Age of a Youth, we may without Absurdity believe that he saved his Mother's Blushes and shared in her Labour, by carrying Home the Works as she finish'd

finish'd them, and soliciting for more: For what other Usher can we suppose she had? So may we imagine that oftentimes the careful Virgin, to buy necessary Food for him, was forced to send him for the Money which remain'd due to her for Work unpaid, or to importune and implore for Part of it at least. And what Humiliation must it not be for the Son of God to be sent on such a Message, and what must not her Confusion be, to be reduced to send him on it? And what if when the sacred Youth carried home the Labours of his Parent to such as had employ'd her, and requested the Fruits of her Fatigue from them? Might he not often meet with some riotous, abusive, noisy Termagant, who, instead of Money, paid him with ill Language, and shutting the Doors against sent him Home empty? How many such Insults are not daily practis'd towards poor and helpless Strangers! And can we suppose that *Christ* escaped them, who went thither in search of them? How often has he come Home hungry, as Children are wont to be, and, asking his Mother for Bread, had the Mortification to hear her answer him with a Sigh, that she had none to give him! What Anguish must she not feel on such Occasions! With what tender Words would she try to appease his Hunger, and console him! With what redoubled Industry would she not labour to procure him the Food he call'd for! And how often has she not defrauded her own Appetite, and robb'd it of its Meal to save one for him! These and such-like Points are exceedingly pleasing as well as useful to meditate on, concerning *Christ* and his blessed Mother. I have here paved the

Way

Way for you to do it. 'Tis now your Business to reap the Advantage by extending and pursuing with Devotion such pious Thoughts as these, in order to become little with the little *Jesus*. Scorn not therefore to reflect on the most humble and minute Circumstances that may be conceived to have attended him; however childish they may appear in the Eye of Worldlings. For they are most evidently capable of adding Force to our Devotion, and new Warmth to our Love, to enflame our Affection, to excite our Compassion, to confer new Purity and Simplicity to our Manners, to nourish in us a strong Propension to Poverty and Humility, to keep up in us a certain Familiarity of Practice of the Virtues we observe in these divine Personages, to create in us a kind of Similitude and Conformity with them, and finally to raise and strengthen our Hopes of enjoying the Fruits of that Goodness we so much admire and wish to imitate in them. 'Tis incompatible with our low State to ascend to the Sublimity of God. But, as *St. Paul* observes, That which seems foolish of him is wiser than the greatest human Prudence, and that which seems weak surpasses all the Power of Man. Besides, the Meditation of these humble Subjects seems capable of abating, if not totally destroying, our Pride; of weakening our Ambition; and confounding our vain Curiosity. So much Good comes from such spiritual Employment. See therefore, and endeavour to become little with the little *Jesus*, that you may (without Prejudice to Humility) grow up and be great in Measure as He shall: follow him whitherever he goes, and keep your Eyes always upon him.

But

But have you yet reflected enough to gather from what has been said, how painful their Poverty must be, and how mortifying to this bashful Family? Had they, think you, choice of any thing; any thing superfluous; any thing of curious. No. This was contrary to a State of Poverty, and therefore she, who loved Poverty so well, would never have consented to possess any thing of that Kind. Nay, so scrupulous was She of giving Way to Curiosity, or any thing that seemed opposite to Poverty or virtuous Industry, that She would not at any Price, nor for the Sake of any one, so much as put her Finger to rich, curious, trifling, or unnecessary Works. No, She would often say, when such Trifles were brought to her; Let them work at this who have not their Time at Heart. And how indeed could She in such a dejected State of Poverty, afford to idle away so much precious Time as is required in the contrivance as well as working of certain expensive Bawbles, of no Signification even when they are finish'd? Tho' Poverty was not the sole Dissuasive that kept her from such kind of Work. No. Had She been less poor than She really was, She would have refused them alike. Since such kind of Employments, properly speaking, are but a more dangerous kind of Idleness; as may appear from many Reasons. *First*, Because they are but an expensive Method of wasting and mispending Time: since all such kinds of Labours require many more Hours (not to say Days and Months) to compleat them, than they possibly can be worth when compleated. *Secondly*, Because they are the Causes of Vain-glory in such as work them. Oh how many

F

fond

fond and self-applauding Looks does the Worker throw away upon such idle Pieces of Ingenuity! That curiously flower'd Apron; that embroider'd Mantle; this other Trimming so richly woven, so well concerted: How often, alas, how often does it engross the Contriver's Thoughts even when away from it; even at the most sacred Occupations! And when the Mind should be employ'd in studying how to render the Soul more pleasing in the Sight of God, it has enough to do to contrive, to carry on, to perfect a Work of this Nature, of no Manner of Consequence when it is done. This is a Weakness the female Sex are more particularly guilty of, a Weakness so much the more to be lamented in them, as they are insensible in general how blameable it is. And yet I make no doubt but that devout Sex will soon be convinced of it, if they but seriously reflect, on the Time they lose by it, the ill Habits they gain, and the Mischiefs they do: And all to tax themselves and others with an unmerited Applause. *Thirdly*, These kinds of Labours are condemnable on account of the Pride they occasion in the Persons they are done for: Experience shews us that these Sorts of Things are the proper Fuel to feed and foment the Fire of Pride. For as what is mean and lowly cherishes Humility, so what is curious and gaudy nourishes Pride and Vanity. *Fourthly*, They are Causes of alienating the Soul from God: For as St. Gregory very judiciously Remarks, The Soul becomes more and more wean'd from the divine Love, in Proportion as its Affection for earthly Objects encreases. *Fifthly*, They are unhappy Incitements to the Concupiscence of the Eye, one of the

the three great Origins of all Sin in the World : For such vain Objects can be useful to no other End than to attract the Looks of the Vain. And yet as often as any one takes Delight in idly gazing on such vain and empty Trifles, be she the Worker or the Enjoyer of them, so often she offends God. *Sixthly*, They are but too often a Snare and Bane to such as behold them : Who may many Ways transgress by barely looking on them, for Example, by taking Scandal, by coveting them, by envying the Possessors of them, by rash Judgment, by silent Murmuring, or finally by open Detracting. Think therefore how often, and how many Ways God may be offended by such curious Trifles, or rather laborious Idleness, before they are brought to a Conclusion ? And consider whether you, oh female Reader, and every effeminate Worker of such needless Curiosities are not the guilty Instruments of all those Evils ? Wherefore whoever should persuade you to work them such kind of Things, you ought never to comply with their Request, because no Authority can justify your consenting to the Vanity of others, and whatever can possibly tend to the offending God is absolutely to be avoided. How much more then are you blameable, if, of your own Accord, you do it ; to ingratiate yourselves, more desirous of rendering yourselves agreeable in the Sight of Man than God. Leave therefore to Worldlings such Works, as are indeed the proper Trappings of the World, but the Aversion of God. 'Tis not indeed to be wonder'd that Persons of little Solidity and less Piety should make such vain Amusements their great Business of Life ; but what cannot be sufficient-

ly admired at is, that the devouter Part, they, who are desirous of attaining to perfect Purity of Conscience, should defile themselves with such Soil, such mere Litter! When 'tis plain to be seen how many Evils are produced from it, of which it is not perhaps the least dangerous one, to act so opposite to the Spirit of Poverty. To conclude in a Word, such kind of Employments are shrew'd Signs of Levity, Vanity, and Inconstancy, in the Generality of those who give themselves up to them. Be you therefore, oh spiritual Christian, as apprehensive of such Amusements as you would be of playing with the most venomous Serpent. I would nor however be thought to condemn all beautiful Works of Ingenuity. Nothing more innocent than these pretty Productions of Fancy which are design'd only for a short Relaxation from more intense Applications of the Mind, but especially such Works as are dedicated to the Service of God at his Altar; provided they are done without too much Affection, Delight, or Attachment of Heart, for that is absolutely to be taken Care of. All I mean to decry is those curious Nothings, which tend only to feed Vanity, to nourish Luxury, to bring Poverty to Scorn, to enervate Devotion, and wean the Affections of the Soul from the Creator to the Creature. Of which kind of Curiosities hear what St. Bernard thinks. Tell me, I beseech you, says he, what can such Vanities avail the Body; or what Advantage do they bring to the Soul. They are at best but a poor, empty, childish Satisfaction. And it were hard to invent a severer Imprecation, on those, who, despising the peaceful Enjoyment of pleasant Repose, delight in the Rest-

lessness

lessness of Curiosity, than to wish they may be condemn'd to the Possession of whatever they hanker after.

But let us return from this long Digression (into which the detestable Error of Curiosity led me) to contemplate our blessed Lady in *Egypt* amidst her Labours of Sewing, Knitting, Spinning, &c. Think how diligently, humbly, and patiently she persever'd in these Exercises, without slackening in the least her motherly Care of her divine Son, or the Business of her Family, still assiduous to her devout Exercises of Watching and Prayer, whenever her necessary Occupations permitted her the Leisure. Compassionate her therefore, and at the same Time make this useful Reflection: That even the Queen of Heaven purchas'd Heaven by Violence: And can you then expect to obtain it otherwise? 'Tis not improbable however that some charitable Matrons of her Neighbourhood, Witnesses of her great Industry and extreme Poverty, might now and then send her some small Relief, which she submitted to accept with Humility and Thankfulness. Tho' it is equally probable that the holy St. *Joseph* was as industrious as his great Age would permit him to earn a Support for his Family at the laborious Trade of a Carpenter. Thus you see what ample Subjects of Compassion rise before you at every Step. Pause here a while:—Then requesting the Blessing of the divine *Jesus* and his Parents take leave of these innocent Exiles, who, banish'd without Cause from their native Land, are reduced to wander, and earn their Bread in a foreign Country at the Sweat of their Brows.

C H A P. XII.

Of our Lord's returning from Egypt.

WHEN the Lord had compleated his seven Years Exile in *Egypt*, an Angel appear'd to *Joseph* in a Dream, and bid him carry back the Youth and his Mother to the Land of *Israel*: For they are now dead who fought the Death of the Boy. *Joseph* therefore patiently took the Child and his Mother, and return'd to the Country of the *Israelites*, but at his Arrival upon the Borders, hearing that *Archelaus*, the Son of *Herod*, reign'd there he began to dread going any farther, till again instructed by the Angel he retir'd into *Galilee* to the City of *Nazareth*. Which according to the Martyrologe was much about the same Time of the Year as the Epiphany.

Here again you see as before how God often sends his Revelations, spiritual Comforts, and other Graces as it were but by halves, and not according to the Fulness of our Wishes. This may appear from two Circumstances: *First*, From his sending the Angel to *Joseph* not openly but in a Dream: *Secondly*, From the Angel's not giving him his whole Instructions at once, but at two several Times. Indeed the Gloss says, that God did so, because *St. Joseph*, and every one blest in the like Manner, must be more certain of their Vision from a Repetition of it. But be that as it may, we ought to set a Value upon every the least Gift of Heaven, and be grateful for it, since we ought to assure ourselves

ourselves that God disposes every Thing on his Part for our greatest Benefit.

But now let us stick to our Saviour's Return from *Egypt*. Be you, devout Reader, very attentive to it; 'tis rich in Matter of pious Meditation. Return then mentally to *Egypt*, with the pure Intention of visiting the Child *Jesus*; fancy yourself to find him among other Children, with whom he deigns to play for their spiritual Good: Imagine that he runs to meet you; for he is all Affability, Bounty, and Courtesy. Fly then to prevent him, and throwing yourself on your Knees adore and kiss his sacred Feet: Then rising, take him into your Arms, devoutly embrace him, and dwell awhile in this sweet Contemplation. Think you hear him say to you: Welcome hither, oh devout Soul, partake the glad Tidings with me of our being again at Liberty to return to *Israel*; and since you are come hither at so favourable a Juncture stay with me, and join us in our Journey. In consequence of which express your Joy to him, the Desire you have of accompanying him always, and every where, and the Delight you take in conversing with him. Though, as I have already observ'd to you, these Kind of pious Thoughts may, and undoubtedly will seem childish in the Opinion of Worldlings; yet know that a devout and frequent Meditation on them will yield you a more than common Consolation, and dispose you to greater and more sublime Subjects. After this fancy yourself led by our divine Saviour to his Parents, who graciously receive, and courteously treat you. Throw your-

self again on your Knees, and, devoutly revering them, remain along with them.

The next Morning when they are ready to set out on their Journey, imagine you see some of the most respectable Matrons of the City, and the wiser Part of the Men come to accompany them out of the Gates in Acknowledgment of their peaceful, neighbourly, and pious Manner of living and conversing while among them. For doubtless they had given Notice some Days before-hand of their Departure that they might not seem to steal away in a clandestine Manner, which might have look'd suspicious now they had not the same Reason for doing it as when they fled into *Egypt* to preserve the Infant *Jesus* from the Hands of a Butcher. And now suppose them setting out, holy *Joseph* accompanied by the Men going before, and our Lady following attended by the Matrons. Do you therefore take the blessed Infant in your Arms, and devoutly carry him before her, for She suffers Him not out of her Presence. When they were out of the Gates, the holy *Joseph* dismisses the Company, not suffering them to go on any farther ; when one of the Wealthiest of them call'd the Child *Jesus*, and in Compassion to the Poverty of his Parents bestows a few Pence upon him, and the rest of the Company after the Example of the first do the same. Compassionate here the Confusion of the divine Child, who blushing holds his little Hands out to receive what the Love of Poverty has reduced him to want ; pity likewise his holy Parents who share his Confusion with him, and think on the great Lesson here set you, when you see him who made the Earth, and all that is in it make choice

choice of so rigorous a Poverty, and so penurious a Life for his blessed Parents and himself. What Lustre does not the Virtue of Poverty receive from their Practice! And how can we behold it in them without being charm'd to the Love and Imitation of the like Perfection. After returning Thanks to their Company, and taking their Leave they set out on their Journey. But how, think you, was the little *Jesus* able to go through the Fatigues of so long a Way. When he went into *Egypt* the Smalness of his Size made it easy for his Parents to carry him; but now too big to be carried, he is yet too little and tender to walk it. Possibly indeed some tender-hearted Neighbour might bestow on them an Ass to carry him on. Yet, oh admirable Youth, oh delicate Stripling! Oh Sovereign of Heaven and Earth! How soon did you begin, and what Labours did you consent to suffer for our Sakes? Well might prophetically personate you in those Words: *I am poor, and subject to Labours from my Youth.* What extream Penury? What endless Toil? What bodily Hardships, and rigorous Treatment of yourself did you not assume for our Sakes! Should not this very Labour we are now meditating have sufficed to redeem us? Take then the Child *Jesus*, oh devout Reader, and in your Imagination place him devoutly on the Ass, conduct him carefully, and when he is inclin'd to dismount receive him joyfully in your Arms, and tenderly cherish him awhile, till his blessed Mother comes up, who may be supposed to walk slower. Then resign the divine Child to her Arms, the Reception of whom will stand her in Stead of Repose. Thus they repass the Desert

Desert they came through, where you may frequently compassionate them on the Way, on Account of the little Rest they receive, though wasted Day and Night with Fatigue. When they reach'd the utmost Skirt of the Wilderness, they found there *John* the Baptist, who already began to do Penance, tho' privileg'd from Sin. 'Tis said, that that Part of *Jordan*, where *John* baptised, is the same which the Children of *Israel* pass'd over, when they came through this Desert out of *Egypt*; and that *John* did Penance near the same Place. So that it is not improbable that *Christ* might find him there in his Return from *Egypt*. Fancy then you see him joyfully receiving them: Who remaining with him awhile, and partaking of his course and homely Provisions, share with him in Return the Sweets of spiritual Recreation, and then depart. You therefore at meeting and parting omit not to pay your Reverence to the Saint, but throw yourself at his Feet, and devoutly kissing them recommend yourself to the Intercession of this Youth, excellent and wonderful in every Circumstance of his Life. He was the first Hermit, the Founder and Pattern of all who make Choice of a religious and solitary Life: He was an unspotted Virgin, an excellent Preacher, more than a Prophet, and a glorious Martyr. After parting from *John* the blessed Travellers cross'd over *Jordan*, and call'd at the House of *Elizabeth* where they pass'd some Time in mutual Congratulations, spiritual Joy, and celestial Mirth. Here *Joseph* being inform'd that *Archelaus* reign'd in *Judea*, and admonish'd in a Dream by an Angel, they retir'd to the City of *Nazareth* in *Galilee*.

And

And now we have brought back the Child *Jesus* out of *Egypt*, at whose Return the Sisters, other Relations, and Friends of our blessed Lady come to congratulate with them in *Nazareth*, where they remain, and pursue their usual Love of Poverty. From this Time, to the twelfth Year of Age of the blessed *Jesus*, nothing remarkable is recorded of him. 'Tis said however, and is not improbable, that the Fountain is still to be seen there, out of which he used to draw Water for his Mother. For our truly humble Lord often did such humble Offices for her, as she had no one else to do them. Here too we may suppose, that St. *John* the Evangelist, who was then about five Years old, often came to visit our Lord, accompanied by his Mother, who was Sister to the blessed Virgin. For it is written of him, that he died Sixty seven Years after our Lord's Passion in the Ninety eighth Year of his Age, so that at the Time of *Christ*'s Suffering, which was when he was something turn'd of Thirty three Years old, St. *John* was One and thirty; and consequently the one being seven Years old at his Return from *Egypt*, the other must be five. Imagine then, you see these holy Children conversing together, and contemplate their Conversation in such Manner as the Holy Ghost shall vouchsafe to inspire. What will greatly help your Contemplation is to reflect that this *John* was afterwards that Disciple whom *Christ* loved the most, and conversed the most familiarly with.

C H A P.

C H A P. XIII.

How our Lord Jesus remain'd in Jerusalem.

W H E N our Lord was twelve Years old he went up with his Parents to *Jerusalem*, according to the Law and Custom of the Festival, which lasted for eight Days. Again then, the divine *Jesus* undertakes the Labour of a long Journey, to honour his heavenly Father on the Days holy to him. For infinite was the Love between the Father and Son. But the Joy, which the external Pomp and Honour paid to his Father gave the holy *Jesus*, fell greatly short of the Affliction and bitter Anguish of Heart he felt on Account of the many Crimes by which Sinners dishonour'd him. Thus then was the Lord of the Law observant of the Law; and thus humbly did the Creator of the Greatest mingle with the Least of his Creatures. When the Octave was ended, his Parents returning home, he remain'd in *Jerusalem*. Here, pious Reader, be attentive, and render yourself present to every Thing that passes; you will find the Subject equally devout and profitable. I have already told you, that *Nazareth*, the Place of *Christ's* Abode, is about fifteen Miles distant from *Jerusalem*. When therefore in the Evening our blessed Lady and St. *Joseph*, who had taken different Roads, met at the Inn where they were to put up for that Night; the Virgin, not seeing the Child with her Spouse, in whose Company she expected him to return, immediately

immediately asks him: Where is the Child *Jesus*? To whom he answers, with equal Surprise and Concern, is he not with you? Alas, I thought him return'd in your Company, he came not with me, neither know I what is come of him. Shock'd at this unexpected, unhop'd for Reply, the frighted Mother, bursting into a Flood of Tears, cries: No, ah no, he came not with me. Alas, alas, is this the Care I should have taken of my Child? Is all my Tendernefs come to this? Then rushing forth, distracted with Anxiety, she runs from House to House with all the Composure so much Grief was capable of: Tell me, oh Neighbours, tell me, have you seen my Son? Where is my Child? For Pity's Sake, who has my Child? Ah, dearest *Jesus*! where, where art thou? What is come of thee, my dear, my only Child? Thus ran the anxious Virgin from Place to Place, distracted and lost to Comfort amidst her Grief and Care, the blessed *Joseph* in Tears every where following to console her. But what Consolation could either of them receive when they found not the divine *Jesus*? What must their Sorrow be, especially her's, whose Tendernefs must be greatest! What could avail the Comfort their Neighbours, their Friends, their Relations endeavour'd to give them? Can ought compensate the Loss of *Jesus*? Do you therefore condole with this blessed Couple, whose Affliction must be greater than Tongue can express. For which of all the Troubles they ever suffer'd could come up to this? Let us not then be discontent, when Trouble visits us, since *Jesus* thought not fit to spare his Parents. 'Tis his divine Permission that Afflictions should visit us,

us, they are so many Proofs of his Love to us, and are calculated for our Benefit.

The blessed Virgin, finding all her Searches to no Purpose, retires sorrowful to her Chamber, and throwing herself on her Knees, with Tears of Humility mix'd with Confidence, she thus address'es herself to God her constant Refuge and only Comfort: Oh God, my Father, my eternal Lord, my all-sweet and benign Benefactor! You vouchsafed to bestow your beloved Son upon me, and I, alas, have lost him, nor know where to seek him. Restore him to me again, oh restore him to me. Remove, oh Father, this bitter Heaviness from me, and shew me my Son. I have acted incautiously, but I knew not that I did so: Look not therefore on my Negligence, but on the Excess of my Affliction; and out of your immense Goodness give me back my Son, without whom Life would be a Death to me. Oh where art thou, my dearest beloved Son? What is come of thee? Who enjoys the Blessing of cherishing thee in my Stead? Art thou return'd to Heaven to thy divine Father? For I know thou art the Son of God, and God thyself. Why then didst thou not acquaint me with thy Departure, that I might once more have embraced thee in these Arms, and press'd these Lips to thy divine Mouth before I lost thee? Or rather has not some insidious Mortal laid a Snare for thee? For I know thou art as truly Man, begotten of this Flesh of mine. Too well I remember the hurrying thee away to *Egypt* in thy tenderest Infancy to preserve thee from the Rage of *Herod*: And too much, too much I dread, thou art fallen into the Hands of such another Tyrant. But oh may thy heavenly Father preserve

JESUS CHRIST.

95

preserve thee from every Harm, my dearest Child. Return, oh dearest *Jesus*, to thy afflicted Mother, or let me know but where thou art, and I will come to thee. Forgive this one neglect, and I will never neglect thee more. When did I ever offend thee, that thou shouldst leave me thus. I know you are not unacquainted with the Grief that overwhelms me; oh ease me then, my dearest Son, and delay not returning to me. Did I ever since I bore thee, eat, sleep, or live without thee, before. And now I am without thee, not knowing how. You know, you are all my Hope, my Life, my Joy, and that I cannot subsist without you. Instruct me then where you are, or how I may find you.

With these and such like Ejaculations, the holy Mother of *Christ* sooth'd her Sorrow till the next Morning, when, by Break of Day, they went forth seeking him round all the neighbouring Villages, for there were many Ways from *Jerusalem* to the Place where they then were. Not finding him this Day, they went the next Day in Search of him to other Places and along other Ways, enquiring among all their Friends and Relations; and now not finding him the afflicted Mother redoubles her Fears and Anxiety. But the third Day returning to *Jerusalem* they found him in the Temple, sitting in the Midst of the Doctors. No sooner did the blessed Virgin cast an Eye on the beloved Child, than, transported with sudden inexpressible Joy, she throws herself on her Knees, and with Tears of Consolation returns her sincerest Thanks to God. The divine Youth seeing his Mother came up to her, who, strait clasping him in her Arms, press'd, embrac'd, and sweetly fondled

fondled him : Now she tenderly prints her Kisses on his Cheeks, and holding him at her Breast stands immoveable, unable as yet, thro' an Excess of tender Transport to speak to him till the Desire of possessing him again in Safety, stopp'd the Overflow of Joy and gave her Words a Vent. Then looking wishfully on him. Why, ah, why, my dearest Child, have you used us thus ? With what Grief and Anxiety have not I and your Father been seeking you ! Why, says he, did you seek me ? Know you not that it behoves me to attend to my Father's Affairs ? But this they did not understand the Meaning of. The joyful Mother strait informs her Son of her Desire to return to *Nazareth* : Son, says she, 'tis my Desire that we go back to our peaceful Home, and will you not console me with your Company thither. Yes, oh beloved Parent, replies this Pattern of Obedience, your Pleasure shall be mine ; and as he said he acted, returning with his Parents to *Nazareth*, submitting wholly to their Will in all Things, as other Children ought to do.

You have beheld then the Affliction of the blessed Mother on this Occasion ; and now consider the Hardships of her divine Son, during these three Days. Imagine then you see him at the Door of some poor Man, craving Admittance, where he is receiv'd and sparingly help'd to eat. Thus the poor Child *Jesus* delights to accompany with the Poor. Next consider him sitting amidst the Doctors, where, with a serene, wise, and yet respectful Countenance, he questions them as if he were ignorant of the Things he asks : All which he does partly out of Humility, partly not to confound

found them with the miraculous Readiness of his Solutions.

Here likewise you may consider three very remarkable Truths. The *First* is, That whoever wishes to be united to God, must not be attach'd to Parents, Friends, or Relations, but renounce them. For *Christ*, when He was intent upon the Affairs of his heavenly Father, forsook his beloved Mother, and was not to be found among any of his Relations. The *Second* is, That no one who leads a spiritual Life ought to wonder, if he is sometimes in a Sterility of Devotion, and seems to be forsaken by God, since the same happen'd to the very Mother of God. Let not such Persons then be cast down, but seek and endeavour to find him, by persisting in devout Meditation, and pious Works. The *Third* is, That no one should be tenacious of their own Will or Purpose, for tho' our Lord *Jesus* had said, that it was proper for him to attend to the Work of his divine Father, yet he changed his Purpose, and follow'd the Inclination of his blessed Mother, and accompanied her and her holy Spouse to *Nazareth*, where he remain'd submissive to their Will. In which you may likewise admire his profound Humility, of which we shall take more Notice hereafter.

*Three
Things
worthy
Notice.*

G C H A P.

C H A P. XIV.

Of our Lord's Life from the twelfth to the thirtieth Year of his Age.

OUR Lord *Jesus* then return'd from the Temple and from *Jerusalem* with his Parents to *Nazareth*, and lived under their Obedience with them till the Beginning of his thirtieth Year. Nor do we find in sacred Scripture any Thing he did remarkable during that Time. What then shall we admire in him, or conceive him to have done during so great an Interval? For if he did any Thing worthy Admiration, why was it not recorded as well as the rest of his Actions? It seems surprisingly strange. But take Notice here, that his doing nothing wonderful was a kind of miraculous Action. For nothing that attends his Life is void of Mystery. While he was spending his Time in practical Virtue, he kept silent, seemingly unactive, and absconded. This Sovereign Master then who was to teach all Virtues, and to point out the Path of Life, began from his Youth, by sanctifying in his own Person the Practice of a virtuous Life he came to teach, and that in a private, ineffable Manner, unheard of before, that is appearing in the Eyes of the World useless, abject, and simple, as we may devoutly conceive without Danger of Rashness. Tho' I do not pretend to affirm any Thing of this kind, or any other indeed which is not evidently confirm'd by the holy Scriptures, or the Traditions of the Fathers,

JESUS CHRIST.

99

as I have already signified, in the Beginning of this Work.

Our Saviour then, during this Space of Time (as we may reasonably conjecture) retired, as much as possible, from the Company and Conversation of Men: Spending much Time in the Synagogue, which was the Church of that Time, where, in the lowest Place, he would remain for a long Time recollected in fervent Prayer to his divine Father. Thence he would return Home to his beloved Mother and her blessed Spouse, whose Labour he would often alleviate by lending a helping Hand. He would pass and repass amidst the busy World about him, with an Air of as little Attention to their Affairs as if He did not see Mankind: And these would stupidly wonder that so fine a Youth should be seen to do nothing worthy of their Praise. For all expected him to make a shining and considerable Figure among them. For while he was a Boy *he encreased equally in Age and Wisdom in the Sight of God and Man.* But growing up, from his twelfth to his thirtieth Year, he was not remarkable for any Actions of Probity or Manhood above the common Sphere. Which occasion'd a universal Surprise, and drew upon him the Derision of the Publick, who used to call him a useless Idiot, an insignificant Creature, and a stupid Mortal, or by such other kind of Titles. Neither did he apply to any Learning, insomuch that it became a kind of Proverb to say that he was but an old Minor. Such a Life did he lead and persist in, tho' it brought him into Contempt with all Men, who look'd upon him as mean and contemptible, which he previously foretold of

himself by the Mouth of his Prophet, saying, *I am a Worm, and not a Man.*

You see then how much our Lord did, seeming to do nothing; he render'd himself mean and despicable to all, as I have already said. And certainly I know no greater or more difficult Practice in all the Duties of Life than this. And they, in my Opinion, may be said to have reach'd the very Summit of *Christian* Perfection, who are come so far as from their Minds and Hearts to conquer the Arrogance of their Flesh, and truly and unfeignedly to consent to be reputed as nothing, and even contemn'd as mean and insignificant. A Victory over one's self of this Nature is greater and more glorious than the sacking a strongly garrison'd Town, according to that of Solomon, *The patient Man is better than the strong one, and he that conquers his Spirit than the Conquerer of a City,* Prov. xvi. Till then you arrive to this Point, never flatter yourself that you have done any Thing. For as in reality we are but useless, even when we have done our best, according to the Words of *Christ*, till we attain to this Degree of Humility, we are nothing at all, but a vain and empty Consistency. Which the Apostle very plainly expresses, *Whoever thinks himself to be something, being really nothing, deceives himself,* Gal. vi. If you ask why our Lord practis'd this, I shall answer you, that it was not on his own Account, but for your Instruction. And therefore, Christian, if you do not profit from so great a Lesson, you become inexcusable. For 'tis an Abomination to see a Worm, and the destin'd Food of Worms, strutting with Arrogance, and vainly raising himself above himself, when the

the Lord of Majesty deigns to stoop to so abject a Degree of Humiliation.

If any one should deem it an Absurdity to believe that our Lord *Jesus* led for so long a Time such a Life of seeming Inactivity as here mention'd, and is rather disposed to think the Evangelists defective in the Accounts they give of him. I answer, in the first Place, that the Example of so much and so great Virtue cannot properly be call'd a State of Inactivity; since it was the most useful Lesson he could give us, as being, properly speaking, the Foundation of all Virtue. Secondly, it is written in the Gospel of St. *John*, *When the Comforter shall come, the Spirit of Truth, whom I will send to you from the Father, who proceeds from the Father, he will give Testimony of me, and ye shall give Testimony of me, because ye are with me* (that is, in the Quality of Preachers) *from the Beginning.* Joh. xv. And *Peter* says, at the Election of St. *Matthias* the Apostle, *It is proper out of these Men, &c. from the Time of our Lord Jesus Entering in among us, beginning from the Baptism of John, &c.* Acts i. Now he was then beginning about thirty Years old. Luke iii. *John* then had not been his Precursor, had *Jesus* suffered them to preach sooner. Besides if he or they had begun their Mission sooner, how comes it that he was then so little known among his Neighbours, that they should enquire, *Is not this the Carpenter's Son?* Matth. xiii. When in a very short Time after he was commonly call'd the Son of *David*? If then he had begun sooner to do any thing remarkable, something of it, at least, would have been hinted in Holy Scripture, and all the Evangelists had not been

so profoundly silent about him. This seems to be the Opinion of *St. Bernard* as I shall hereafter quote him. But however the Truth of it be, I cannot but think it a very pious Matter of Meditation. 'Tis thus the Lord *Jesus* forms the Sword of Humility, as the Prophet foretold him. *Girt on thy Sword upon thy Lions, ob most powerful!* Psal. xliv. And with what Sword was it more proper to conquer the infernal Prince of Pride than with that of Humility? For we no where read of his having engag'd him with the Weapons of his Greatness, but the opposite Ones, even at the Time of his Passion, when he seem'd to stand in need of all his Immensity. Hence the same Prophet bemoans him to his heavenly Father, saying, *You have averted from him the Help of his Sword, and have not assisted him in the Battle.* Psal. lxxxviii. You see then, Christian Reader, how our Lord began first to do, and then to teach. Acts i. designing one Day to invite you to the Imitation of him, with those ineffable Words, *Learn from me, for I am meek and humble at Heart.* Matth. xi. This then was the Virtue he first chose to practise, and that not in outward Shew only, but from the inmost of his Heart, for he was truly meek and humble at Heart. He was incapable of Fiction, and therefore really humbled himself to seem and be mean and abject in the Eyes of Men; insomuch that even after he began to preach his sublime and heavenly Doctrine, and confirm'd it with Miracles, their Contempt of him continued, and they would often say of him in Derision, *Who is this? Is not this the Carpenter's Son?* Matt. xiii. with other like scornful Expressions. Accord-
ing

ing to this Sense then, it appears how truly the Apostle said, *He exinanated himself taking the Form of a Servant*. Philip. ii. and not only of a Servant, in one Sense, by taking human Flesh; but in the lowest Sense of the Word, that is, he took the Form of a useless Servant by the Lowliness and abject Manner of his Living.

Would you see how powerfully our Lord put on this Sword? Consider every Action of his, and you will find Humility shining in it in all its Lustre. Do but recollect, and you will find it in every Action hitherto taken notice of. And in those which follow you may observe, that he was so far from neglecting the Practice of it, that he encreases in Humility all his Life time, giving us frequent Lessons of it to the Hour of his Death, and even after Death, nay after his Ascension. Did not he towards his End wash his Disciples Feet? Was he not extremely humbled by the Cross he bore on his divine Shoulders? Did he not after his Resurrection, when in a glorified State, call his Disciples, *Brethren*? Go, says he, to *Mary Magdalen*, and tell my Brethren, &c. *John* xx. And even after his Ascension did he not converse familiarly with *Paul*, and as humbly, as if he had been his Equal? *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Acts ix. Where he does not call himself *God* but *me*. And finally at the great and tremendous Day of Judgment will he not, from his majestick and awful Tribunal, say, *As long as ye have done it to one of the least of my Brethren, ye have done it to me?* Matth. xxv.

'Twas not without Reason our Saviour shew'd such a Love for Humility. He knew that as Pride is the Foundation of all Sin, so Hu-

The extraordinary Humility of Christ's Actions.

*Why Christ
was so
fond of
Humility.*

mility is the Basis of every Virtue, and the first Step to Salvation. 'Tis but a tottering Edifice that is not built upon the Groundwork of Humility. Wherefore trust not to your Chastity, to your Poverty, or any other Virtue you are possess'd of, unless it be accompanied with, and supported by Humility. 'Twas *Christ* then that first laid this Foundation, and shew'd how it is to be acquired, to wit, by vilifying and lowering himself in his own Esteem, and in the Opinion of all the World, and by the uninterrupted Exercise of Self-humiliation. Go you then, oh Christian, and do the like, if you would be perfectly humble as becomes a Christian. For Humility, Self-contempt, and the Practice of lowly and vilifying Works must precede all other Virtues. In Relation to which thus says *St. Bernard*: Humility which is obtain'd by Humiliation is the Basis of all spiritual Structures. For Humiliation is as truly the Way to Humility, as Patience is to Peace, or Reading to Knowledge. If you thirst after Humility be not averse to Humiliation. For if you cannot stoop to Humiliation, you will never be able to rise to Humility. *And elsewhere*: Whoever means to raise himself above himself, must set out by thinking meanly of himself. Lest soaring above his Sphere he fall beneath it, for Want of being perfectly grounded in Humility. And as there is no becoming in Reality great, but by the Merit of Endeavouring to be little, therefore whoever is desirous of rising to Perfection, must restrain himself by Humility, that Humility may raise him. Wherefore, gentle Reader, when you see yourself humbled, rejoice at it, 'tis a good Sign,
and

and an Argument of approaching Grace. *For as the Heart is exalted before a Fall, so be before Exaltation it is humbled.* Prov. xvi. For 'tis alike written, that *God resists the Proud, and gives Grace to the Humble.* Jam. iv. And a little farther he adds, 'Tis doing but little to submit to the Humiliations which comes immediately from God, unless we learn to accept chearfully those he is pleased to send us by the Means of his Creatures. Learn an admirable Example of this from holy *David*, who, being cursed by a Servant, was too much animated with Grace to be agitated with Resentment of the Injury, *What is there, says he, between me and you, ob Sons of Servia?* 4 Kings xvi. Oh true Man according to God's own Heart, not moved to Indignation or Anger, by the scornful Reproaches of a Slave! Well might he say with a safe Conscience. *If I return'd Evil to those that did Evil to me.* Psal vii. Let thus much suffice, at present, of the Virtue of Humility.

Now let us return to the Life and Actions of *Christ*, which is and ought to be the Mirror of ours, and the principal Object of our Attention. Be present then, as I have often exhorted you, to all that relates to him. And contemplate that blessed Family, small indeed in Number, but great in Dignity, rich in Grace and Virtue, but poor and humble in their Manner of Living. The venerable old Man *Joseph* sought with all possible Industry as much Employment in his humble Profession, as his feeble Age would permit him to go through; and our Lady was as diligent at her manual Labour, besides the Business of her Family, which we may suppose, was not little, the preparing Food for

for her divine Son, her blessed Spouse, and Self, with other domestick Fatigues consequential to this, were all done by her, as she was too poor to have any Servant to help her. Compassionate her therefore on the laborious Life she leads; -compassionate likewise our divine Lord, who shares with both their most laborious Occupations, for *he came to minister, and not to be minister'd to*, as he himself says, *Matth. xx.* Fancy then you see him busied along with his beloved Parents in the most servile Works of their little Mansion. Devoutly imagine you see these three sacred Persons sitting at their frugal Refections, not made up of Dainties or expensive Viands, flattering to the Palate, and enflaming to the Passions; but composed of the coarse and homely Provisions usual among the poorest People. What sublime, what heavenly Conversation passes between them! No vain, no idle Discourse finds Admittance there, but every Sentence is holy, full of Wisdom, and dictated by the Holy Ghost. Oh ineffable Banquet, where the Mind is no less substantially nourish'd than the Body! After their Meals all retire to Prayers, each to their little separate Chambers, our blessed Lady to her's, St. *Joseph* to his, and our Saviour to his; follow our divine Lord in your Mind, and view him devoutly persisting in fervent Prayer to his heavenly Father. In this little Cell, after spending the greatest Part of his Nights in heavenly Contemplation, he reposes the remaining Part on the Ground, as meanly as the poorest of his Creatures. Thus do you each Night endeavour to accompany him in your Mind. Oh, conceal'd Divinity, why do you thus

thus afflict that precious, that innocent Body so continually, when the Fatigue of one such Night might suffice to redeem the whole World? Did the Excess of your Love urge you to all this? Such was your ardent Zeal for the lost Sheep you came to convey to Heaven on your divine Shoulders! Must you, oh King of Kings, eternal God, who supply the Wants of all, who afford all Persons of all Stations what is requisite for them; must you, I say, be subject to Poverty, Meanness, and Hardship, Watching, or Sleeping, Eating, or Acting; and must every Circumstance of your Life be attended with Severity? What then shall become of those, who seek nothing but Ease, Luxury, and Vanity? Surely we did not learn this Kind of empty Pursuits from this mortified Master? Are we even then wiser than he is? No. He has taught us, both by Word and Example, Humility, Poverty, Mortification of the Flesh, and Exercise of the Body: Let us then improve from the Lessons of this sublime Teacher, who neither will nor can deceive. And according to the Apostle's Advice, *Tim. vi. having Food and Raiment, let us be content with them*, and use them as far as useful to a fitting Necessity, but not to Superfluity: At the same time, carefully and constantly attending to the spiritual Study and Exercise of other Christian Virtues.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

Of the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ,

OUR Saviour then, after having lived so painful and abject a Life till he was compleatly nine and twenty Years old, when he enter'd into his thirtieth Year said to his Mother, The Time is now come for me to glorify and manifest my Father, by appearing in the World, and working the Salvation of Man for which he sent me. Be of good Heart therefore, oh beloved Mother, for I will soon return to you; then kneeling to her, as a Man and her Son, the great Master of Humility asks and receives her Blessing. Then She to him, as God, kneels, receives his Blessing, and, tenderly embracing him, with Tears thus says to him: Go, my blessed Son, go with the Blessing of your divine Father and mine, be mindful of me, and hasten to return to comfort me. Thus then the blessed *Jesus*, respectfully taking Leave of his beloved Mother and her venerable Spouse, sets out from *Nazareth* towards *Jerusalem* by the Way of *Jordan*, where he found *John* baptizing. Thus the Lord of the World proceeds alone, for as yet he had no Disciples. View him then attentively, in the Presence of God, and see him travelling alone, barefooted, thro' a long and rugged Road, and condole with him. Oh Lord, whither art thou going, and by what Ways! Are you not the Sovereign of all the Kings of the Earth?

Where

Where then, oh Lord, are your Nobles, your Soldiers, your Attendants, and Equipage? Where are your Guards to keep off the Populace from approaching too near your sacred Person, as other Monarchs are wont to have? Where are the Trumpets, the Instruments, and royal Ensigns? Who goes before to prepare a Palace for your Reception? Where are all the Honours paid to the royal Worms of this World? Are not the Heavens and the Earth fill'd with your Glory? Why then do you proceed thus inglorious? *Do not a Thousand Thousands pay Homage to you in your Kingdom above, and Millions minister to you?* Dan. vii. Why then do you thus travel alone, a-foot, nay, barefooted? But ah, the Cause is plain: You are not now in your Kingdom. *For your Kingdom is not of this World,* John xviii. *You have exinanited yourself, taking the Form of a Servant,* Phil. ii. *You are become as one of us, a Way-farer and a Stranger,* Psalm. xxxviii. like our Fathers, you are become a Servant that we may become Kings. You are to conduct us to your own Kingdom, putting us into the Way that leads thither. Why then, alas, do we go out of it? Why do we not follow you? Why do we not humble ourselves, but pursue and delight in vain Honours, empty Pomp, and passing Enjoyments? It must be surely because this is our Kingdom, and that we consider ourselves as Native here and not as Pilgrims, otherwise should we be so much taken up here? Oh senseless Sons of Men! Why do you embrace the Shadow instead of the Substance? Why prefer ye the dubious and transitory to what is certain and lastingly solid? Why so earnest in giving up
Eternity

Eternity for what is but temporal? Ah 'tis too true, oh Lord, that we forget our being but Pilgrims and Strangers upon Earth, else we should find no Difficulty in following thee. We should be content with what is meerly necessary on our Way, and without burdening ourselves, or retarding our Journey with more, follow you, running on after *the sweet-scented Odour of your Perfumes*, We should be free from every Load, and looking on the transitory Things of this Life as something behind us or out of our Way, we should neglect and despise them. Thus then our Lord *Jesus* humbly travels on, some Days Journey, till he arrives at *Jordan*.

When he arrived at *Jordan*, he there found *John* baptising Sinners, and a great Multitude of People, who were come thither to hear his Preaching: For they took him to be *Christ*. *Jesus* therefore says to him: I intreat you to baptise me along with these People. *John* looking stedfastly on him, and knowing him in Spirit, with Fear and Reverence answer'd, Lord I myself need to be baptised by you? Perfit not, *John*, replies *Christ*, but let it be done as I say; for it is expedient that I fulfil all Justice. Conceal, at present, what you know of me, for my Time is not yet come. Baptise me therefore; for now is a Time of Humiliation, and therefore will I practise Humility in its greatest Perfection.

Be mindful then of the Practice of Humility; but especially here where we shall treat of it particularly. The Gloss of this Place tells us, that there are three Degrees in Humility. The *First* is to be subject to those above us, and

JESUS CHRIST.

III

not to prefer ourselves to those who are equal to us. The *Second* is to subject ourselves to our Equals, and not prefer ourselves to our Inferiors. The *Third* and most perfect is to place ourselves beneath and subject ourselves to our Inferiors. This is the Degree *Christ* practised on this Occasion, and therefore he fulfill'd all Humility. You may hence observe how considerably *Christ* advanced in Humility, by comparing this with the foregoing Chapter. There he contented himself with the Appearance of a mean and abject, nay, useless Servant; here he subjects himself to his own Servant, depreciates himself and extols the other. There he humbly conversed with Mankind under the outward Appearance of an Insignificant; but here his Humility is so improved, that he puts on the Likeness of a Sinner, and is contented to pass for one. For *John* was preaching Penance to, and baptising Sinners, yet our humble Lord *Jesus* will be baptised in their Presence, nay, in Company with them. He came, says St. Bernard, amidst a Crowd of Populace to the Baptism of *John*. And he came as one out of the sinful Multitude, who was the only one exempt from Sin. To guess from those about him, who would think him to be the Son of God, who would take him for the great Lord of Majesty? How great is his Humility on this Occasion? The same Humility indeed appear'd in his Circumcision, where he likewise took on him the Likeness of a Sinner; but here it shone forth with greater Lustre, in proportion to the greater Number of Spectators. But was there not Room to apprehend, that the Appearance of a Sinner might prejudice him, who

who intended to preach publickly to Sinners? Be that as it may, it was not a Motive strong enough to hinder this great Master of Humility from profoundly humbling himself. It was his Pleasure to seek Scorn and Self-humiliation by appearing what he was not, on purpose to leave us a practical Instruction. But what Use do we make of that Instruction, who, on the contrary, put on the Likeness of every Thing but our real selves, purely to deceive the World into praising and honouring us? If we think we possess any good Qualities, how solicitous are we to expose them to the Eyes of the World, and how industrious are we on the other Side to cover all our Defects, tho' ever so conscious of being Sinners? Where is the Humility of this? Is this the Use we make of *Christ's* Instruction? In relation to this, hear what *St. Bernard* says: There is a Humility produced by Charity, which helps to kindle it; but there is another Humility void of all Warmth, which is engender'd by self-convicting Truth. The latter consists in Reflection, the former in Affection. For if at the Light of Truth you look seriously on yourself, without Flattery or Favour, you cannot help being humbled, and appearing contemptible in your own Eyes, from this true Reflection, tho' you perhaps are unwilling to appear so in the Eyes of others. By this Means you will be humble indeed by the Operation of Truth, but not by the Infusion of Charity. For were your Heart as sincerely humbled, as your Mind is convinced of your deserving to be so, by the Light of that Truth which has so faithfully given you to yourself; you would doubtless be willing that others should

should discover in you the Deformities which Self-conviction has shewn to yourself. Though it must be own'd, that it is neither adviseable nor expedient to reveal all that passes within us, and therefore Charity and Truth jointly forbid us to publish such Things of ourselves, as may injure us or give offence to others. But else who can doubt of your Disregard for Truth, if captivated by Self-love you conceal the Truth of your own Unworthiness, which you are inwardly convinced of? You prove it sufficiently by preferring to that Truth your own Interest and vain Honour. *And afterwards he adds*: If then you are really humble with that true Humiliation, which Truth, the greatest Searcher of Hearts, infuses into the Soul; add the Humility of the Will to it, and make a Virtue of Necessity. For there is no true Virtue without the Consent of the Will. Which will then be effected, if the Desire of outward Esteem in the Eyes of your Neighbour be proportion'd to the Knowledge you have conceiv'd of the inward State of your Soul. For otherwise you have Reason to apprehend, lest the dreadful Reproach of *David* be justly applied to you. *Because* (saith he) *he hath done deceitfully in his Sight, that his Iniquity may be found unto hatred*, Psal. xxxv. *Weight* (saith Solomon) *and Weight—* are abominable before God, Prov. xx. What means this? It means; that having duly weigh'd the little Value of your own Merit within your own Breast, in the Balance of Equity and Truth, you measure it outwardly at a different Rate, and impose yourself upon the World for more Value than you really are. But fear

H

God,

God, and let that Fear deter you from the Guilt of so heinous a Crime, that is, of extolling by an ambitious Will what Truth ought to humble within you : For that is opposing Truth and struggling against the Will of God. Chuse rather to acquiesce to him, and that your Will be ever subject to Truth by a devout and submissive Humility. *For shall not my Soul* (saith the Royal Psalmist) *be subject to God?* Psal. lxi. Neither is it enough to be subject to God only, unless you are likewise the same to all Mankind for God's Sake ; that is, subject to your Superiors, subject to your Equals, and subject to your Inferiors. In this Manner *Christ* teaches us we must fulfil all Justice. Go thou then to thy Inferior, if thou wilt be perfectly righteous, pay a Respect to your Inferior, and humbly stoop to those beneath you. Thus for St. *Bernard*. Who again : Who is just (says he) but he that is truly humble ? For when the Lord of all things would have humbly stoop'd to his Servant, and submitted to be baptised by the Hands of St. *John* : He, aw'd by the Majesty of his Person, *Christ* spoke thus to him : *Suffer it to be so now, for thus it be- comes us to fulfil all Righteousness.* Matth. iii. placing the Accomplishment of perfect Justice in the Perfection of a true Humility. He therefore that is just is truly humble : And this Justice in the Humble is plain in this : Because he gives to every one his Right : He robs not another of his Property, but gives Honour to God, and retains Abjection for himself. But this will appear more plainly if you will but consider the Injustice of the Proud and Arrogant, who attribute every good Gift of God

to the Rewards of their own Merit. In Relation to which St. *Bernard* again speaks: As Evil may take its Source from the greatest Good, when become great, we make use of the divine Gifts as if they were not such, without even making God an Acknowledgment of them; so they, who seem to have reach'd the utmost Peak of Grandeur and Greatness, on Account of the divine Benefits they have received, are in Truth excessively Little, for Want of returning the Thanks due to their supreme Benefactor. However, gentle Reader, I have spared the Weakness of your Senses in the softening Expressions of *Great* and *Little*. Out of Regard to the Tenderness of your Ears I have forbore calling things by their real Names I think they deserve. I should have said very *Wicked*, and very *Good*. For 'tis beyond all Dispute that they are so much the deeper in Wickedness, who ascribe to themselves the Excellences they may possess. Nothing, in short, can be more criminal. But should any one say, be this Crime far from me, since I know that 'tis the Grace of God that makes me what I am, and yet at the same Time studiously aim at Self-Praise for the Grace which he has received: Is not such a one a Thief and a Robber? Hear only what he is from the Mouth of Truth itself: *From thy own Mouth will I judge thee, Oh wicked Servant.* Luke xix. And what indeed can be more execrably wicked than that Servant who usurps to himself the Praises due to his Lord? Thus St. *Bernard*. Hence may you see that the Perfection of all Righteousness consists in true Humility, which derogates nothing from God's Honour, nor attributes

butes that to itself, which is not its due. Neither does it injure our Neighbour. For the truly Humble is neither rash in judging him, nor prefers himself to any, but rather thinks himself inferior to all Mankind, and chuses the lowest Place among them. Hence *St. Bernard* again thus says: How dost thou know, oh Mortal, but that the very Man whose flagitious Life and infamous Conduct you look upon with Horror and Contempt, deeming him the Greatest of Reprobates, and infinitely more sinful than yourself, who live, or at least seem to yourself to live a sober, virtuous, or pious Life: How dost thou know, I say, but that very Man may become not only better than those or than yourself in his future Practices, and be even now, perhaps, dearer in the Sight of God than you; and therefore how do you know but it may be contrary to the divine Pleasure for us to place him beneath ourselves, or to refuse him the first Honours among us? Chuse thou (*saith Christ*) the lowest Place, to wit, that you alone may be the lowest of all, and not only not prefer yourself, but even not presume to compare yourself to any. Thus *saith St. Bernard*. The Virtue of Humility is again many Ways recommended to us by authentick Applauses of the same Saint. A great Mother indeed is Humility (*saith he*) and a most sublime Virtue, which earns that for us, which we are taught not aspire to, enabling us to attain to the Knowledge we cannot learn, and to conceive of and from the holy WORD sublime Mysteries not to be explained by Words. And why so? Not on the Account of Merit, so much as of the divine Pleasure of the eternal Father of the

WORD,

WORD, the Spouse of the Soul our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is God blessed above all things created. And again: Humility is a Virtue, by which Mankind, through a perfect Knowledge of his own Unworthiness, becomes mean in his own Sight. And in another Place: The Virtue of Humility alone can repair the Crime of a Breach of Charity: And indeed only that Virtue is unaccustom'd to vain Boasting, a Stranger to Pride, and not given to Contention. For he that is truly humble argues not in Judgment, nor dissembles any Justice. And farther: Humility reconciles us with God, and pleaseth him greatly when we possess it. Again: Humility has ever been a special Virtue intimately annex'd to the divine Grace. For it is ever customary with sacred Piety, for the Sake of preserving Humility, to require that the more we advance in Perfection the less perfect we should think ourselves. For even they, who are advancing to the supreme Degree of Spirituality, retain still something of the Imperfections of the lowest, inasmuch that they cannot perceive themselves to have attain'd even the Verge of it.—A beautiful Tessure is Humility and Virginity. Neither is that Soul little pleasing in the Sight of God, in which Humility is an Ornament to Virginity, and Virginity adorns Humility. What Praise is not she worthy of, in whom Fertility exalts Humility, and a Birth renders sacred Virginity? You have here before you a Lesson concerning both the Virgin, and the Humble: And if you cannot imitate the Virginity of the one, imitate at least the Humility of the other. Virginity is a laudable Virtue: But Humility much the more necessary, That is a

H 3

Counsel;

Counsel ; this a Precept : To that you are invited : To this you are obliged. Of that it is said : *He that can take, let him take.* Matth. xix. But of this : *Unless you become as this little one, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Ibid. xviii. That therefore you are rewarded for, and this is expected from you. Wherefore you may be saved without Virginity : But without Humility you cannot. For where Virginity lost has no more the Power to please, the Tears shed for it by Humility may effectually do it. And without Rashness, I may say, that the Virginity of the sacred Virgin herself would not have been pleasing to God without Humility. For, *Upon whom shall my Spirit rest* (saith the Lord) *but upon the humble and serene?* Had not then the Holy Virgin been humble, the Holy Ghost had not rested upon her. And had not the divine Spirit overshadow'd her, undoubtedly she would not have been pregnant. For how indeed without him could she have conceived by him? 'Tis clear then that when she conceived by the Holy Ghost, as herself witnesseth, the Lord regarded the Humility of his Handmaid more than her Virginity. Whence it follows beyond dispute: That 'tis Humility which renders Virginity acceptable. What Reply can the Virgin vainly elated make to this? Our blessed Lady, having as it were forgot her Virginity, glories only in the Abjection of her Humility, and you, neglecting this, vainly flatter yourself in the Possession of an unavailing Virginity. *He beheld* (saith she) *the Humility of his Handmaid.* She. What She? Truly the holy, the pious, and the devout Virgin. And are you more innocently
 prue;

JESUS CHRIST.

I

pure; more fervently devout than She? Or can you presume to think that your Chastity is greater or more pleasing to God than Her's? so as to be able to please without Humility by That, which she could not do by her own? How much the more honourable thy Condition is render'd by the Gift of Chastity, so much the more do you injure yourself as often as you soil that Innocence of Life, with the Mixture of Pride. Charity, Chastity, and Humility have no Beauty in themselves, but only in Proportion to the Beauty they have in the Sight of God. What more beautiful than that Chastity which renders clean the Being, conceiv'd from Uncleannefs, changes Enmity into Friendship, and Men into Angels? The Angel and the chaste Man differ indeed in Point of Felicity, but not of Virtue. For if the Chastity of the one be happier, that of the other is stronger. 'Tis Chastity alone which in this mortal State represents a Kind of Immortality. That alone which, amidst the nuptial Solemnities, imitates the Method of that blessed and heavenly Region, where they neither marry nor are married, giving us an imperfect Relish of the divine and heavenly Conversation there enjoy'd among the Blessed. This frail Vessel which here we carry with us, and in which we are often in Danger, Chastity sanctifies, not unlike the sweet-scented-Balsoms wherewith dead Bodies being embalm'd are preserved from In Corruption. It curbs the Senses, restrains the Faculties of the Body, and preserves the whole Man from Corruption and loose Desires attending Idleness. But whatever Beauty that may appear from the shining Ornament of Chastity, This however is of no Value or Merit

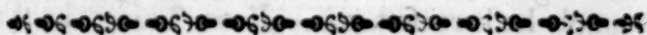
without Charity. Nor ought we to wonder at this. For what Good indeed can we receive without it? Not Faith, though we should remove Mountains. Not Knowledge, though it be that which speaks with the Tongues of Angels. Not Martyrdom, though by it I should deliver up my Body, saith St. Paul, to be burnt. Neither without it can we receive any Good, nor with it can we reject it, though the minutest. Chastity without Charity is like a Lamp without Oil. Extract away the Oil, and the Lamp will not burn. So take away Charity, and Chastity will not please. In a Word, As Chastity avails us nothing without Charity, so neither the one nor the other avail any thing without Humility, nor can they be truly call'd Virtues. For 'tis by Humility that we deserve the Possession of them both, because *to the Humble God gives Grace*. Humility preserves those Virtues which we have already acquired; for *the Spirit of God reposes only upon the Humble and Peaceful*: It perfects that Virtue we are steady in, for *Virtue is perfected in Infirmary*, that is, in Humility. It conquers Pride, that implacable Enemy to Grace, that Source of all Iniquity, and rids itself, as well as others, from its insolent Tyranny. That alone powerfully resists its Malice, and subdues its Presumption, being a Kind of Bulwark and Asylum of Virtue. Thus far, gentle Reader, have I given you many and beautiful Commendations of Humility from St. Bernard, that great Lover of Truth and Abjection. Endeavour likewise to comprehend the sublime Doctrines he gives relating to other Virtues, and practise them; but now let us return to the Baptism of our Lord.

When

When *John* beheld then, that it was the Will of our Lord to be baptised by him, he readily submitted to it, and baptised him. And here now, pious Reader, cast an Eye towards him, and attentively behold, how the Lord of Majesty humbly uncloaths himself like any meer Mortal, and notwithstanding the extream Rigour of the Season descends thus into the frozen River. Through the immense Love he bore us he vouchsafed thus to work our Salvation, by instituting the Sacrament of Baptism to wash away the Guilt of our Crimes. By this he truly espoused to himself not only his whole Church, but more especially in a singular and ineffable Manner the Souls of the Faithful. For by the Faith we promise him in our Baptism we are truly wedded to our Lord *Jesus*, the holy Prophet saying in his Person: *I will espouse thee to myself in Faith.* Hosea ii. Wherefore is this most solemn and ineffable Mystery a Work of the greatest Service and Benefit to Mankind? And therefore the holy Church triumphantly sings: *This Day the Church is united to her heavenly Spouse: Because Christ in the River Jordan washed away her Crimes.* And in this most excellent Work the three divine Persons of the most sacred Trinity, in a singular Manner, manifested themselves, and descended: For the *Holy Ghost* as a Dove came and remain'd upon him, and the Voice of the Father was heard, saying: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Matth. iii. In which Place saith St. Bernard: He said, *hear ye Him.* Wherefore saith the Saint: Begin then now to speak, Oh beloved *Jesus*, since thou art now commission'd to speak from thy Father himself. How long,
oh

oh divine Virtue, and Wisdom of God, how long, I say, will you lie conceal'd amidst Mankind, and appear only invested with the Infirmities of a pure, mortal, and insignificant Man? How long, oh glorious King, and King of Heaven, will you suffer yourself to be call'd the Carpenter's Son, and even vouchsafe to be thought so? For the holy Evangelist St. *Luke* witnesseth, that *He was still thought the Son of Joseph.* *Luke* iii. Oh Humility of *Christ*! How greatly dost thou confound the Excess of my Vanity; I scarce know any thing, and yet flatter myself to know much, and never know when or how to be silent; but without Shame, being indiscreetly forward, and full of vain Boasting, I am quick in Talking, ready in Teaching, and slow in Harkening to others. But when *Christ* remain'd silent during so long a Space of Time, and hid the Treasures of his divine Wisdom from Mankind, was it, think you, because he fear'd the Assaults of Vain-glory from the empty Praises of Men? What had he to fear from that, who was the true Glory of his Father? He fear'd however, but his Fear was not for himself but for us: He was afraid for us, well knowing the Room there was for such Fear. For us he was careful, us he instructed more by Works than by Words, and what he afterwards taught us by Word, he proclaim'd by Example: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of Heart.* *Matth.* xi. We hear of very little before concerning the Infancy of *Jesus Christ*, and now to the Three and thirtieth Year of his Age we hear of nothing he either did or said. However, from this Time he can no longer remain conceal'd, being thus publick-ly

ly declared by his Father. Thus much St. *Beranrd.* And this is the Authority which I adduced in the foregoing Chapter, from which you may gather how our Lord *Jesus* humbly remain'd silent so long a space of Time for our greater spiritual Instruction. And you cannot but observe, in the whole Series of what has been already said, the true Practice of a profound Humility, concerning which I cannot speak to you but with Pleasure, it being a most sublime Virtue, and what we stand greatly in need of. And is with so much the more Study to be sought, and admired with so much the greater Affection, by how much the more our Lord in every Action of his Life was remarkably solicitous of Practising it.



C H A P. XVI.

*Of the Fast and Temptations of Christ :
Of his Return to his Mother : Of the
four Means to attain to a perfect Purity
of Heart : Of the great Advantages of
Prayer : Of the Resistance to be made to
Gluttony : Why and for whom God works
his Miracles.*

OUR divine Lord *Jesus*, immediately after his Baptism, retired into the Wilderness to a certain Mountain known by the Name of the *Quarantain Peak*, and there fasted forty compleat Days and Nights, conversing (according to St. *Mark*) with the Brutes. Here then again contemplate your divine Master : And endeavour to copy from this sublime Pattern the
many

many excellent Virtues he points out to you in his own Practice. To be solitary and retir'd from the Eyes of the World is his greatest Ambition ; a rigorous Abstinence from every Food is his daily Repast ; Prayer and almost uninterrupted Watches are his darling Exercise ; short and interrupted Slumbers on the hard, cold, bare Ground, are his slender Repose ; and the humble Society of brute Beasts are all his Company. Though the whole Life of *Christ* will appear to have been one continued Series of Pain and corporal Suffering ; yet here it seems to be attended with the most afflicting Circumstances, and therefore deserves a particular Share of your Compassion. Pity him then, and let your Pity excite in you a zealous Resolution of sharing his Hardships, by following the Example he here sets you. Four Things in this Passage are principally to be remark'd, which are jointly and mutually conducive to the spiritual Exercise of every pious Soul : To wit, Retirement, Fasting, Prayer, and Mortification of the Flesh. And it is chiefly by these that we are to hope to obtain that perfect Purity of Heart, which cannot be too much coveted, as it includes the Possession of every Virtue. For Purity of Heart contains Charity, Humility, Patience in a Word, an Assemblage of every virtuous Quality, and an absolute Alienation from Vice and all its Tendencies : Because the Heart that gives Admittance to any one Vice, or even suffers in itself the Decay of any one Virtue, from that Moment ceases to be pure. Hence, as we are told in the Conferences of the Holy Fathers of the Desert, the whole Object of spiritual Exercises is, and should be the Acquisition of a perfect Purity of Heart. For 'tis by this that every

every Man is to render himself worthy the beatifical Vision, as our Lord himself says in the Gospel : *Blessed are the Clean of Heart, for they shall see God.* Wherefore St. Bernard says : That he is the nearest to God, whose Heart is the most purified. The natural Consequence of which Truth is, that to reach to an intimate Union with God, we must have a perfect Purity of Heart.

Now towards obtaining this, gentle Reader, fervent and assiduous Prayer is of the greatest Service, as I shall hereafter shew you. But what can avail the Prayer of One given to Gluttony, Insobriety, Delicacy, and Sloth? Nothing. No : Fasting and Mortification of the Flesh are absolutely requisite. Tho' Prudence is necessary in the Practice of both, Indiscretion is the Bane of every good Action.

Neither does Retirement seem of less Utility. For amidst Noise and Tumult how can Prayer be perform'd with that Decency which is proper to it? And who is the Mortal so free from Danger that dares give a loose to his Senses, particularly to Seeing and Hearing much, without Offence to his Purity or Innocence of Heart? *Death enters by the Windows (of our Eyes) to our Souls :* And therefore, gentle Reader, follow our Lord to his Retirement, that is, separate yourself, after his Example, from the Commerce of the World; and be as retir'd as your Station will permit, if you wish to be united to him, and enjoy that beatifical Vision which is the Reward of internal Cleanness. Fly the Conversation of all, but more especially of Wordlings; fly the Novelty of Friendships, even devout Ones: Shut your Eyes and Ears to all vain and transitory Objects; and fly
above

above all, as the most destructive Poison to the Soul, all that may in the least disturb the Peace of your Mind or Breast. 'Twas not without Reason that the Fathers, for their Habitations made Choice of Deserts, and Places remote from all Correspondence with Mankind, and recommended to all their Pupils to be Blind, Deaf, and Dumb to the Conversation of the World. For (as St. Bernard says to this Purpose) if you are desirous of becoming sensible of the sweet Emotions of the Holy Ghost; if you have an effectual Eagerness to have your Soul wedded to God, according to the Prophet, *Sit down solitary, and you have raised yourself above yourself*, by the bare Desire of espousing the Lord of Angels. In Reality is it not above your native Meanness to adhere to God, and to become one in Spirit with him? Sit down therefore, and be solitary as the Turtle: Avoid the Crouds, and have no Dealings, you can avoid, with the rest of Mankind. Forget even your Country, and the House of your Father; *and the King shall be desirous of your Beauty*. Endeavour then, oh pious Soul, to be alone, that you may keep yourself wholly to him, whom you have wholly chosen to yourself. Retire from the Publick, retire from your own Family, retire from your most intimate Friends, and even from your necessary Attendants. For know that such is the Reservedness of your divine Spouse that, he will never indulge you with his Company in the Presence of others. Withdraw then, but not so much bodily as mentally. Withdraw, but let it be in Intention, in Spirit, and with Devotion. For *Christ*, your Lord, who is present with you,

you, is so in Spirit, and the Retirement he expects from you is not so much that of the Body as that of the Spirit. Though indeed it will not be useless for you to retire personally sometimes, if Convenience will permit it; especially at the Time of Prayer (as we shall hereafter observe.) You may truly be said to be retir'd and alone; if your Thoughts are not employ'd on trivial Things, if you are not affected by what passes in Company, if you condemn what the World prizes, if you are fatigued with what your worldly Companions hanker after, if you are insensible to ill Usage, and mindless of Injuries: Otherwise you cannot be truly deem'd a Solitary, however personally alone you may chance to be. You see then that it is not impossible to be retir'd amidst a Croud; or to be amidst a Tumult though alone in a Desert. Thus then, however great be the Number of People you converse with, you may still be alone if you will but refrain from curious Searching into their Conversation, or rashly setting up for a Judge of it. Thus far *St. Bernard*. Hence appears how necessary Solitude is, and how fruitless is that of the Body, if unaccompanied with that of the Mind. However I must still observe, that corporal Retirement is of the greatest Service that the Mind may not lose its Recollection by exterior Objects. Endeavour therefore, with all due Affection and Discretion, to imitate as much as possible your divine Lord and Spouse in the great and useful Virtues of Solitude, Prayer, Fasting, and corporal Mortification.

Learn likewise, from his conversing with dumb Creatures, to behave yourself humbly towards

wards all, and to bear with Meekness even such as appear to you guilty of Misbehaviour. To this End pay often a mental Visit to our Lord in his Retirement, and observe his Manner of conversing there. Every faithful Christian ought to repeat this Visit at least once a Day, from Twelfth-Day to the End of his forty Day's Retreat: When (as the Scripture takes Notice) he began to be hungry. 'Twas this Opportunity *Satan* laid hold of to approach him, and try to find out, if he was the Son of God, by tempting him to Gluttony. *If (says he) thou art the Son of God, bid these Stones be made Bread.* But this Artifice could not surprise the Master of all Wisdom, who so rejected it as neither to be affected by the Temptation of Gluttony, nor leave the Tempter Room to discover what he wish'd to know; rebuking him with Holy Scripture, without asserting or denying himself to be the Son of God. Here let the Example of *Christ* teach you the Duty of resisting the Passion of Gluttony: Which is the first Victory we ought to begin by, if we mean to gain a compleat Triumph over Sin. The Man who is overcome by Gluttony is too weak to cope with any other Vice. For as the Commentator upon this Passage in *St. Matthew* says, He labours in vain to gain a proper Dominion over his vicious Appetites, who remains a Slave to his own Belly.

The Devil, not discouraged by this Defeat, took our Saviour up to *Jerusalem*, our divine Lord suffering himself to be carried about by the cruel Serpent, who thirsted after his precious Blood, as well as after that of his Elect, and patiently enduring such rough Treatment to set us

an Example of Meekness. Attend therefore seriously to the Lesson here set you, and profit by it. When *Satan* had brought our Saviour to *Jerusalem* he carried him to the Pinnacle of the Temple, there to tempt him to Vanity, desirous as before of discovering whether he was the Son of God or not. But here again our Saviour frustrated his Intentions contenting himself with confounding the Serpent by Authority of Scripture. So that, according to St. *Bernard*, our Saviour's not manifesting his Divinity, on these two Occasions, was a sufficient Argument with the infernal Enemy to conclude, that he was a meer Man: And therefore it was that he ventur'd a third Time to try to shake that Steadiness which appear'd to him to be purely human. Accordingly the Fiend took him to a high Mountain at a little Distance from the abovenamed Peak, where shewing him the Riches of the World he endeavour'd to seduce him to Avarice; but to his utter Confusion the Destroyer was again disappointed, and put to flight. See then, and remember what Trials and Usage your divine Lord submitted to, and cease to wonder that you should be tempted also.

Yet think not, pious Reader, that these were the only Trials he endured. They who reckon but three Temptations in the Life of *Christ* must surely be ignorant of Scripture, which tells us, that *the whole Life of Man upon Earth is one continued Temptation*. Job vii. And That he endur'd in the most rigorous Manner. For, as St. *Paul* says, he was tempted in all, by Similitude to us, though his Temptations were but external, and without Sin. When he had

gain'd the Victory, the Angels came and minister'd to him. Here be attentive, and devoutly behold our Lord eating, surrounded by the Angels who attend him; and endeavour to be present to every thing that is here mention'd, the Subject being very beautiful, and equally devout. Here it may be ask'd, what the Angels minister'd to our Lord to eat after so long and rigorous a Fast? This the Scripture makes no mention of, and therefore we may dispose this victorious Banquet as our Devotion shall inspire us. If indeed we consider the Greatness of his Power, the Question is solved, because at Pleasure he could have commanded what he pleased out of all that was created, or might have created afresh whatever he had conceiv'd a liking for. But, though he made use of this Power in Behalf of the Multitudes whom he fed twice with a small Number of Loaves and Fishes, yet we no where find that he ever exerted it for his own, or Disciples Use. To the contrary we read, that in his Presence the Disciples were reduced to pluck Ears of Corn to stay their hungry Appetites. So likewise when fatigued with his Journey he sat at the Well talking with the *Samaritan*, it is not said, that he created Food, but that he sent his Disciples to fetch some from the neighbouring City. So that it is not likely that *Christ* was fed herein the Desert, by any Miracle, for his Miracles were all wrought in Publick, and in the Presence of many. Yet there were none here present with him but Angels, what then can we find to meditate on? There were no Dwellings here, nor any Viands to be found ready prepar'd; so that we may conceive that the Angels brought thither the Food

Food they found elsewhere prepared. And why may we not believe it to have been so, when the like happen'd to *Daniel*? For when the Prophet *Abacuc* Dan. xiv. had prepared the Pottage for his Reapers, an Angel of the Lord took him by the Hair of the Head, to *Daniel*, from *Judea* to *Babylon* that he might eat, and then brought him back. Let us then piously meditate, and rejoice with our divine Lord at his victorious Dinner, and with the blessed Virgin who bore a Part in his Joy, tho' distant from him. For we may reasonably conjecture that the heavenly Host who came to pay their Homages to our divine Saviour after his Victories over *Satan*, finding him press'd with Hunger, went in his Name to the blessed Virgin, his Mother, and brought from her the necessary Food of her own preparing, which they respectfully laid before him to eat. And with what Love, Honour, and Devotion may we not suppose they administer'd every thing to him, one presenting him Bread, another helping him to drink, another obsequiously tendering to him the Fish, or other humble Provision his blessed Mother had dress'd for him: And all jointly recreating him with heavenly Musick, and divine Canticles. This done our divine Lord dismisses them to their celestial Habitation, descends from the Mountain, and prepares to return to his blessed Mother to console her. And here again behold the Lord of all things undertaking another laborious Journey on Foot; and condole with him. He came by the Way of *Jordan*, where *John*, beholding him advancing forwards, pointed him out with his Finger, crying out at the same Time, *Behold*

the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the Sins of the World. John i. 'Tis he, 'tis he himself, on whom I saw the Holy Ghost descending, when I baptised him. And again the next Day, seeing him walk by the Side of *Jordan*, he cried out a second Time: *Behold the Lamb of God.* Then *Andrew*, with another of *John's* Disciples, went after *Jesus*. And our divine Lord, anxious of their Salvation, to give them the greater Confidence in him, turn'd about to them, and ask'd, whom do you seek? To whom they answer'd: where Lord is your Habitation? He then took them with him to the little House he had retir'd to in those Parts, and they staid with him the whole Day. After this *Andrew* brought with him his Brother *Peter*, whom *Jesus* courteously received; knowing well what he design'd him to be. He then told him, that he should afterwards be call'd *Cephas* or *Peter*, and thus they became acquainted, and in some Measure intimate. Afterwards *Jesus* having a Mind to go into *Galilee* to his blessed Mother, he left those Parts, and set out on his Journey. When he return'd home, his holy Parents were transported with inexpressible Joy, the sacred Virgin ran to embrace him, and received him in her tender and immaculate Arms, to whom, and to her venerable Spouse, the divine *Jesus*, reverently inclining, return'd his tender Expressions of Joy with mutual Tenderness, and remain'd with them, as he used to do.

C H A P. XVII.

Of Christ's Opening the Book in the Synagogue.

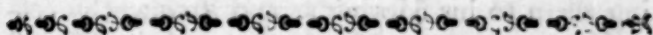
THUS far, by the Grace of God, we have regularly treated the Passages of the Life of *Christ*, without omitting any or at least very few Circumstances that may be supposed to have attended him : But I do not design to do the same hereafter. For it would be too prolix to reduce into practical Meditations every thing he said and did : Besides it ought to be our chief Study, after the Example of *St. Cecily*, to bear in our Breasts the Facts relating to him. Wherefore for the Future I shall only collect some of the principal Facts, to meditate assiduously on, till we come to his Passion, for there nothing ought to be omitted. Neither ought we elsewhere to omit any thing wholly, or to neglect meditating on it in a proper Place and Time. But I do not intend to be so extensive in Meditations henceforward, unless it be very seldom. Let it suffice to place before your Eyes the bare Facts and Sayings on which you yourselves may at leisure piously and familiarly meditate. For in this seems to consist the chief Sweetness, Efficacy, and Fruit of these Meditations ; that always and every where you contemplate *Christ* in some one Action, or Saying of his, as, when he is with his Disciples, when he is with Sinners, when he talks or preaches to the Multitude, walking or sitting, sleeping or waking, eating himself,

or ministering to others, healing the Sick, or doing other Miracles. In these and such like Circumstances, consider all his Gestures: but especially contemplate his divine Countenance, if you can bring it to your Imagination, which however appears to me the most difficult Part of Meditation. When you are thus contemplating the divine Face of *Christ*, consider whether he looks graciously upon you; your Conscience will tell you whether you may hope it or not. Let what has been said in this Chapter serve you to recur to in whatever I may hereafter relate, without adding any Meditations to it. But let us proceed to the remaining Part of this blessed Life.

After then that our Lord *Jesus* return'd from being baptized, he persisted in his accustom'd Humility; beginning however by Degrees to manifest himself in teaching and preaching in a private Manner. For he is not said to have taken on him the Function of a publick Preacher, during the whole following Year, that is, not till the Miracle he wrought at the Marriage Feast, which was on the Day twelfth Month after he had been baptized. And though he did sometimes preach and suffer his Disciples to baptize, yet till after the Imprisonment of the Baptist he did not, either by himself, or his Disciples, wholly apply to Preaching, especially in Publick. Even in this giving us a Lesson of surprising Humility, by paying such Respect to *John*, who was so greatly inferior to him in Preaching, as well as in every thing else. He did not begin his Mission then with Noise and Ostentation, but humbly and gradually.

One Day therefore being with the rest of the *Jews*, in the Synagogue; he stood up and read

read in the Book of *Isaiah* the following Words: *The Spirit of the Lord upon me, wherefore he has anointed me, he has sent me to evangelize to the Poor.* *Isaiah lxi.* Then folding the Book, this Scripture is this Day fulfill'd, said he, in your Ears. Behold him then here humbly taking upon him the Office of a Lecturer to them, and reading before them, with an affable and serene Countenance: Thus he lays the Scripture open to their Understandings, and begins humbly to manifest himself in those Words, This Scripture is this Day fulfill'd, that is, in other Words, I am he, who is here spoken of. Thus while he was speaking the whole astonish'd Multitude dwelt on the humble Modesty and Beauty of his heavenly Aspect, which added Efficacy to the divine Words he spoke; for he was exceedingly Beautiful, and inexpressibly Eloquent. Of both which the Prophet thus fore-sang. *Beautiful of Form above the Children of Men, Grace is diffused in thy Lips.* *Psal. xliv.*



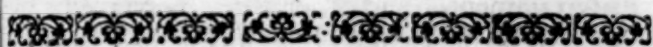
C H A P. XVIII.

Of his Calling his Disciples.

AND now our Lord *Jesus* began to call his Disciples, and to solicit the Salvation of our Race, still preserving unhurt his former Humility. *Peter* and *Andrew* were the first he call'd, and them he call'd three times. The first time of his calling them was as above, near the River *Jordan*, where they first came a little acquainted with him. *John i.* the second was from the Ship, when they had been catching

Fish as St. *Luke* relates. *Luke* v. Then they follow'd him only with a Design of returning Home, but then they heard some Part of his Doctrine. The *third* was likewise from the Ship, when, according to St. *Mark*, he said to them, *Come after me, I will make you Fishers of Men*, *Mark* i. Then leaving their Nets they follow'd him, *Ibid*. So likewise he called *James* and *John*, at the same Places the two last times, and what relates to them is contain'd in the same Places where *Peter* and *Andrew* are treated of. He called also St. *John* at the Marriage-Feast, as St. *Jerom* says, though it is not mention'd in Scripture. He called St. *Philip*, saying, follow me. *John* i. and so he did *Matthew*. *Matth*. ix. As to his Manner of calling the rest, it is no where written. Consider then here, and behold him in the aforementioned Vocations, and in his Conversation with them; with what Affection he calls them, rendering himself affable, familiar, and sociable with them, attracting them inwardly and outwardly, bringing them to his Mother's, and frequently condescending to go with them to their Houses. He taught them, instructed them, and was specially careful of them, as a Mother is of an only Son. 'Tis said, as a Tradition from St. *Peter*'s verbal Account, that when ever he slept at the same Place with them, if, rising in the Night to pray according to his Custom, he found any of them slightly cover'd he would graciously take the Pains to wrap them up better, having an extraordinary Tendernefs for them. For though they were but Men of mean Extraction and Condition, yet he knew what he had design'd them for, and that they were to be the

the Princes of the World, and the appointed Leaders of all his Faithful in the spiritual War to be waged against *Satan*. And here, for God's Sake, consider from what small Beginnings the Church took its Rise. The Lord would not make Choice of the Wise and Powerful of this World, lest the Wonders he was about to perform should be ascribed to their Abilities; but reserving these Prodigies to himself, redeem'd us out of the Abundance of his own Goodness, Power, and Wisdom.



C H A P. XIX.

Of the Conversion of Water into Wine at the Marriage-Feast.

THOUGH it be uncertain whose Marriage this was that was celebrated at *Cana* of *Galilee*, as the Ecclesiastical History takes notice; let us however, for Meditation sake, suppose it to be of *St. John* the Evangelist, which *St. Jerom* seems to affirm in his Preface upon *St. John*. Our blessed Lady was there present, not as a Stranger invited thither, but as the Head, and principal Lady of the Feast, and the chief Manager of it; so that she was as it were at Home, being in the House of her Sister, whose Elder she was. This may be gather'd first from the Text which tells us, that the Mother of *Jesus* was there, but that *Jesus* and his Disciples were invited thither, which ought

ought to be understood likewise of all the rest of the Persons present. So that when *Mary Salome*, the Wife of *Zebedy*, came to her to *Nazareth* to tell her that she design'd to marry her Son *John*, our blessed Lady went back with her to *Cana* some Days before the appointed Time of the Feast, to make Preparations for it, inso-much that when the Guests were invited to it she was actually there. *Secondly*, It may be gather'd from her taking Notice of the Want of Wine; by which she appears not so much to be a Guest as concern'd in the Distribution of the Entertainment, and therefore perceived the Wine to be deficient. For if she had been sitting there as a Guest, would the modest Virgin have sat, think you, by her Son amidst the Men, and if she had, would she have risen up among them to complain of the Want of Wine? Or even had she been seated among the Women, had she, think you, been more sensible of the Want of Wine than any other of her Sex there present? Or would she have risen from her Seat to go and acquaint her Son with it, for we cannot suppose, that she call'd out aloud? All this seems improbable, and therefore we may more probably suppose, that she was present there not merely as a Guest, but rather as one who serv'd and minister'd as beforemention'd, for 'tis said of her: That she was ever ready and officious in helping and serving others.

The *third* is, that she commanded the Servants to go to her Son, and to do whatever else she appointed them: By which it is plain, that she had a Superiority over them, and that the Feast was order'd and dispos'd according to her Management, and therefore she was solicitous

lest any thing necessary should be wanting, Hence then, according to this Manner, consider our Lord *Jesus* at this Feast, eating with the rest of the Company, seated not at the Head of the Guests, nor amongst the chiefest of those who were invited, but in the lowest Place, and among the poorest and meanest Sort, as we may gather from his own Words: *When thou art invited to a Feast, sit down in the lowest Place.* Luke xiv. Wherefore as it was ever his Custom to teach first by Example, what he afterwards taught by Words, 'tis most likely, that he took not the first and chiefest Place at this Feast, after the Manner of the Proud and Vain; but rather that he chose to sit in the lowest Seat among the more simple and meaner Sort of the Company. Contemplate here likewise our blessed Lady: How obsequious and cheerful she is, and how diligently careful that all things might be perform'd with great Exactness and Decency, submissively helping the Servants, and shewing them how, and of what things they should serve and minister to those who were invited. And when the Feast was almost towards the End, they came to her, and said: There is no more Wine left to set before them. To whom she answer'd: Expect a short time and I will procure that you may have more. And presently departing she went to her Son *Jesus* who sat humbly at the lower End of the Table, and said to him: My Son, *they have no more Wine*, and this our Sister being poor I know not how we shall supply this Want: But *Jesus* made answer, and said to her: *Woman what is this to me and thee?* This Answer could not but seem severe to the holy Virgin.

gin. But as St. *Bernard* remarks, those Words were full of Mystery, and were given for our greater Instruction.

Wherefore the Saint, in this Place, speaks to this Effect: Dost thou ask, oh Lord, what is this to thee and to her? Is it nothing to the Mother and her Son? Do you ask what it appertains to her, when thou thyself art the blessed Fruit of her virginal Womb? Is she not the same who conceiv'd without Offence to her Modesty, and brought forth without Prejudice to her Virginity? Is it not she, in whose Womb you vouchsafed to be inclosed the Space of nine Months, whose sacred Breasts gave thee Suck, and with whom, at the Age of twelve Years, you came back from *Jerusalem*, and was obedient to her? Why then, most beloved *Jesus*, dost thou now perplex and grieve her tender Soul, saying: *What is it to me and to thee, oh Woman*. I already comprehend that 'twas not to reproach her, or to confound the great Modesty of thy virgin Mother, which made you say: *Woman, what is that to me and to thee?* For when the Servants come to thee by her Orders, you did without Hesitation what she suggested.

Why then, gentle Reader, did he first here make her this Answer? Truly for no other Reason but for our Instruction, and to teach us, that they who having forsaken the World by a thorough Conversion to Almighty God, should have no longer a Tie to their carnal Friends, Relations, or Parents, and that an over Solitude for the supplying their Necessities should not deter them from the daily Study and Practice of those spiritual Exercises belonging

JESUS CHRIST.

141

to their State and Calling. For tho' as long as we are of the World there is a Duty incumbent upon us, in regard to the Care of our Parents; yet when we have once forsaken it, so far as even to forsake ourselves with it, much more ought we to relinquish all temporal Care and Solitude for them. To which Purpose, it is written of a certain holy Monk or Hermite, who having quitted the World, and lived a long time a solitary and retired Life in the Desert, being one Day earnestly entreated by his own Brother for his Advice in some worldly and temporal Affair, he calmly remitted him to consult another of their Brothers who had been dead long before, to whom when the Brother replied, with much Surprise at his Advice, that his other Brother was dead, so am I, answer'd the Monk, also dead to this World, and therefore have nothing to do it, or with its troublesome Affairs. This is what our Lord *Jesus* meant when he answer'd his blessed Mother, saying: *Woman, what is that to me and to thee?* Clearly teaching us not to be careful or solicitous for our Friends and Relations, or even Parents themselves, in those things which are contrary or inconsistent with the Rules our Religion prescribes to us. This he also confirm'd in another Place, when being told by one of the Standers-by that his Mother and Brethren waited without desiring to speak to him, he said: *Who is my Mother, and who are my Brethren?* Matth. xii. Thus far St. Bernard. But to return again to our Subject: The blessed Virgin was not in the least dismay'd or dejected at this unexpected Answer of her beloved Son, but full of Confidence in his great Bounty and Goodness,

Goodness, she presently return'd again to the Servants, and said to them: *Go to my Son, and whatever he shall say to you, do ye.* Joh. ii. They went as she had order'd them; and having fill'd the Water-Pots of Stone, which stood there, with Water as our Lord had commanded, He again said to them: *Draw now, and carry to the chief Steward.* Here first may we consider the great Prudence and Wisdom of our Lord *Jesus* in sending the Wine first to the chiefest and most dignified Person at the Feast. Secondly, We may likewise consider, that our Lord sat not near him, but far below him, when he said: Take it to the Master of the Feast: Whereby it appears, that he held the first Place among the invited, and our Lord *Jesus* the lowest. The Servants however gave the Wine to him (the chief Steward) and to the rest of the Company, openly declaring the Manner how it was made, they being Eye-witnesses of the Miracle, and his Disciples thence believ'd in him. When the Feast was ended *Jesus* took *John* apart by himself, and said unto him: Leave this Woman whom thou hast chosen for thy Wife, and follow me, and I will lead thee to a far more sublime Union and heavenly Marriage than this. Who immediately left his Wife, and follow'd *Christ*, and became his Disciple. And here may we learn many profitable things for our Instruction and Example. The first is, that our Lord, sanctifying by his Presence this Marriage, gives us to understand that Matrimony is both a lawful and honourable State, and ordain'd by God himself. And in calling St. *John* from the same he shews the spiritual Marriage and Union of the Soul with God.

God in a single Life, and a State of Virginity, to be much more excellent and perfect.

After he had wrought this Miracle, our Lord *Jesus* departed from thence, and resolved now to attend to those things only which regarded the Salvation of Man, and therefore purpos'd thenceforward to preach his heavenly Doctrine openly to all Mankind. He would first however conduct his holy Mother safely Home to her little Habitation. Wherefore taking her by the Hand, and being follow'd by St. *John*, and the rest of his Disciples, they went into *Capharnaum*, which is near *Nazareth*, and after some few Days they from thence reach'd *Nazareth*. Contemplate here, devout Reader, this blessed Couple, the Mother, and the Son. Consider them humbly traveling on Foot, and tho' wearied with the Fatigues of their Journey, yet united with the strictest Ties of Love to each other. Oh, what a heavenly Couple is this! Such as the World was never before blessed with. Consider likewise his Disciples who reverently follow them and attentively listen to the sacred Doctrine which proceeds from the Mouth of their divine Master, who was never idle, but was ever instructing them in such things as might redound to their good. Wherefore we may piously imagine, that the Abundance of heavenly Consolation, which They reap'd from such sacred Conversation greatly allay'd the Toils of their fatiguing Journey.

C H A P. XX.

*Of the Sermon of our Lord on the Mount,
which he began by Poverty.*

OUR Lord, calling his Disciples apart from the Croud, ascended with them to Mount Tabor, about two Miles distant from Nazareth, to infuse into them his divine Doctrine. For it was fit to instruct them first, who were to be appointed Masters and Leaders of the rest. He taught them then many things in that Place in a most beautiful and ample Sermon, and no wonder a Sermon should be such which was deliver'd by the Mouth of the Lord. He taught them the Beatitudes; the Dignity of Prayer, Fasting, Alms-Deeds, and many Truths relating to every other Virtue, as appears in the Holy Gospel. Which I advise you, gentle Reader, to peruse seriously and frequently, and to endeavour to enrich your Memory with, for they are full of spiritual Sublimity; but would require too great a Prolixity to consider here, neither is it proper to croud Meditations like these with too many Expositions of Scripture. However, I shall not entirely drop them, but here and there intersperse some few, and add to them some moral Reflections of my own, or of the holy Fathers, as Occasion, and your Instruction may require. Let it at present suffice to observe, that our Lord began this his Exhortation with Poverty, giving us thereby to understand that

Poverty

Poverty is the first Foundation of all spiritual Structures. Hence nothing can be more inconsistent than for *Christ*, the Pattern of Poverty, to be follow'd by Persons loaded with temporal Riches: since they whose Affections are link'd to such fleeting Vanities are more properly in a State of Slavery than Freedom. And they only are qualified for being happy whose Hearts are at Liberty. Therefore it was that *Christ* told them, *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit*, &c. For no Heart is free but that which is link'd to God, and they only are so whose Affections tend only to him. We render ourselves subject to what ever we affectionately love; and therefore ought we to love nothing but him, because Subjection to him is the only true Liberty. The truly Poor therefore may justly be call'd blessed; who for God's Sake contemn all things else. For by this Means he becomes, in great Measure, united to God. Of this great Virtue thus says St. *Bernard*.

Poverty is a noble Kind of Wings that lift us in a trice to the Kingdom of Heaven. The other Virtues consequential to this obtain us only a Promise of it, but to Poverty, Felicity is rather given than promised: Wherefore our Saviour speaks in the present Tense, *for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*. Matth. xii. And a little farther, he adds: We see some poor Persons, sorrowful and pusillanimous, who would be quite otherwise, was their Poverty such as we are speaking of, for then they would consider themselves as Princes, and Possessors of a heavenly Kingdom. But, alas, the Generality of Mankind would be poor, upon Condition of wanting nothing,

thing, and love no other Poverty than such a one as is attended with no Inconveniency. *And elsewhere:* And I, says he, when once I am exalted above the Earth, may boldly affirm, that I will draw all things after me: For if once I put on the Likeness of my Brother, I may without Rashness adopt his Speech; let not then the Rich of this World imagine, that the Brethren of *Christ* possess nothing but heavenly things, because they hear *Christ* say, *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* No: For they are likewise in Possession of the Earth, as *having nothing*, yet *possessing all things*, not begging like Mumpers, but receiving as Masters, so much the more truly Masters of all as they covet nothing. In a Word, the whole World to the faithful Lover of Poverty is a Fund of Riches, because Prosperity and Adversity are alike subservient and beneficial to him. The covetous Wordling yearns after earthly things like a Beggar; the faithful Lover of Poverty despises them like a Prince. Ask any one of those who with insatiable Eagerness pursue worldly Gain, what they think of them who, selling what they have to distribute the Price of it to the Poor, purchase the Kingdom of Heaven with earthly Substance, and whether he looks upon them to act prudently or not? He will doubtless approve their Wisdom. Ask him again why he neglects to do himself what he deems well done by others? He will answer, I cannot do it. But why? Truly because tyranizing Avarice will not permit him: Because he is not free, because he has neither Right to, nor Possession of what he seems to enjoy. If they are thine,

put

put them out to Interest; purchase with them a solid Estate, and with an earthly Fund buy an eternal heavenly One. If you are not Lord enough of them to have this in your Power, I shall deem you not Master, but Slave to them; the Steward not the Possessor. Thus far *St. Bernard*. Now let us return to our Meditation. Consider then our Lord *Jesus* humbly sitting on the Ground, with his Disciples round him: How affably does he converse with them, as if one of themselves, teaching, and in a beautiful, benign, and pathetic Manner inculcating to them the Practice of the abovemention'd Virtues. And ever study, as I have before advised you, to contemplate his divine Countenance. Cast an attentive Eye likewise on his Disciples, and imagine you see, with what Reverence, Humility, and fix'd Attention they observe his blessed Aspect, hear his wonderful Discourse, and imprint it in their Minds, reaping sovereign Delight from his Words and heavenly Looks. In this Meditation endeavour to share their Delight with them, attentive as if you beheld him speaking, and ready to approach with them in case you should be call'd, dwelling on this pious Subject, according to the Lights and Graces which it shall please God to bestow on you.

After the Sermon is over behold our Lord *Jesus* descending from the Mount with his Disciples, and familiarly conversing with them upon the Road; and observe how, that little simple Congregation follow him, not in any formal Order, but as the Hen is follow'd by her Chickens, each crowding about him, and

struggling to get near him, the better to hear his divine Discourse. Think you see the Multitudes running to meet him, and bringing their Sick to be cured by him; for he cured all.



CHAP. XXI.

Of the Servant of the Centurion, and the Son of the Prince cured by him.

AT Capbarnaum a certain Centurion (that is, a Captain of a Company, composed of a hundred Men) had a Servant who lay sick. Full of Faith, therefore he sent to our Lord Jesus to entreat him to cure him. And our humble Lord answer'd, *I will come and cure him.* Luke vii. When the Centurion heard the Answer, he immediately sent back to him this Message. *Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldst enter under my Roof: Say but by Word, and my Servant shall be cured.* Upon which Jesus, applauding his Faith, cured the Servant at a Distance. In the same City lived a Prince (or petty King) who went in Person to Jesus, beseeching him to come to his House, and cure his sick Son. But Jesus refused to go, tho' he acquiesced to cure the Youth. Here consider the Merit of Faith in the Centurion, and this fresh Instance of Humility in our Saviour, who offer'd himself to go to the Servant; tho' he refused to go to the pompous Prince. Here you see

I
wh
all
blec
and
Pal
hav
Luk
the
the
Way
then
rally

see that no Acception ought to be made of Persons. Our Lord shews more Regard to the Servant of the Officer than to the Son of the King. *John iv.* Thus then it little becomes us to shew any Regard in our charitable Offices to external Pomp and Appearance: 'Tis the Goodness, the right Intention, and Exigence of the Person, which are to draw our Attention. In a Word, our Services to our Neighbour are to be guided not by Complaisance, but by Christian Charity.

C H A P. XXII.

Of the Paralytic brought in to our Lord, by the House-Top, and cured by him.

IN the same City of *Capbarnaum*, while our Lord *Jesus* was teaching in a certain House, where Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, from all Parts of *Judea* and *Jerusalem*, were assembled to hear him, some People came thither and struggled to get in, with a Man sick of the Palsy, whom they had brought on purpose to have him cured by our Saviour. *Matth. ii. Luke v.* But finding it impossible to get in at the Door, for the great Croud, they got upon the Top of the House, and carried him in that Way, and placed him before *Christ*. *Jesus* then, seeing their great Faith, said to the Paralytic: *Thy Sins are forgiven thee.* *Mark ix.*

The Pharisees and Doctors, looking maliciously on, said one to another, that he had blasphemed, since he attributed to himself (whom they consider'd as meer Man) the Power of forgiving Sins, which belong'd only to God. Our benign and humble Lord, Searcher of the Hearts and Reins of Man, answer'd, *Why do you think Evil in your Hearts? That you may know*, added he, *that the Son of Man has Power on Earth to forgive Sins, I say rise and walk.* Mark ix,

*Four things
to be medi-
tated.*

Here are four things worthy our Meditation. *First*, The Perspicacity of *Christ's* Understanding, who saw into their Hearts. *Secondly*, that Illness is often the Consequence of Sin, and that Absolution from this often frees us from That; which may likewise be gather'd from the sick Man cured at the Fish-pond, whom our Saviour caution'd not to sin again, lest something worse should befall him. *Thirdly*, that great must be the Merit of Faith, since the Faith of one Person may be beneficial to another, as we have before seen, in the Case of the Centurion's Servant, and shall farther see, in the Daughter of the *Cananean*, who was cured by the Faith of the Mother. And it daily is verifi'd in the Baptism of Infants, who, if they die before their Age of Discretion, receive by the Faith of others the Earnest, by which they are saved thro' the Merits of *Christ*, contrary to the accurs'd Doctrine of some Hereticks. *Fourthly*, we may meditate the Goodness of our divine Lord sitting amidst the perverse Pharisees, affably confounding their Malice, and working a Miracle to try to convert them. Here recollect what I have said on the general Subject of Meditation.

C H A P. XXIII.

Of our Lord's curing Simon's Mother-in-law.

IN the same City it happen'd likewise that our Lord call'd in at the House of *Simon Peter*, whose Mother-in-law was in a high Fever. Our humble Lord, inform'd of it, familiarly stretch'd forth his sacred Hand to her, and cured her, and she immediately arose and minister'd to him and his Disciples. But what did she minister? We do not find that recorded. You may then devoutly imagine, that in the House of such poor People nothing but poor and humble Viands, such as were soon prepared, were laid before them: Piously fancy too that you see our Lord himself humbly helping to set things in decent Order, in the House of his Disciple; these and such other humble Exercises you may entertain your Thoughts with, for all such we may reasonably conceive our Lord to have done, who was come to minister, and not to be ministered unto. Thus then consider him familiarly seated at Table, under this humble Roof, in the Midst of this little Company of simple Ones, and chearfully partaking of their coarse Regale, with so much the more Pleasure as his beloved Poverty presided there.

C H A P. XXIV

Of our Lord's Sleeping in the Boat

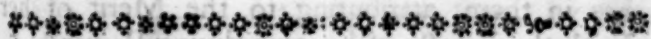
OUR Lord Jesus, entering into a Boat with his Disciples, composed himself to Sleep, leaning his Head on a Pillow. For he might well be fatigued, passing his Nights generally in Prayer, and his Days in the Toil of Preaching. When he was asleep, a sudden Storm arising, the Disciples were affrighted and apprehended themselves in Danger of Perishing, but dared not awake him for some Time. At length however, overcome with Fear, they roused him, crying: *Lord, save us, we perish.* Our Lord arose, and, chiding them for their little Faith, *commanded the Sea and the Winds, and the Storm gave over.* *Matth. viii. Mark iv. Luke viii.* In these Circumstances contemplate our Lord, according to the general Rules I have before given you. Add this farther Consideration, that though God seems sometimes to sleep to us, and to our Concerns, especially in Time of Tribulation and Need, yet we ought to remain firm in Faith and Confidence, without staggering; for that he is ever really awake, and diligently watchful in what regards our Good and Safety.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXV.

Of the Widow's Son, rais'd by our Lord,

AS our Lord was once going towards the City of *Naim*, he met a Multitude of People bearing along, and attending to the Grave the Corpse of a young Man, the late Son of a Widow who follow'd. The compassionate *Jesus*, moved to Pity at her Grief, approach'd, stopp'd the Bearers, and made them set down the Bier, then addressing himself, said: Young Man, I say to you, arise. And the Youth, who had been dead, arose, and he restor'd him to his Mother. At which all were astonish'd, and gave Praises to God for so great a Wonder. *Luke vii.* Here recur to the general Heads of Meditation.



C H A P. XXVI.

Of our Lord's raising a Girl from the Dead, and curing Martha.

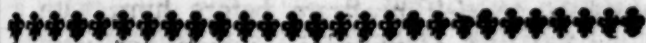
AT the Instance of a very considerable Man, our Lord *Jesus* was going with him to cure his Daughter. A great Multitude accompanied him, among whom was a Woman extremely ill, who is reported to have been *Martha*, the Sister of *Mary Magdalen*. This Woman,

Woman, acquainted with the Wonders he had wrought, said to herself, that if she could but touch the Hem of his Garment she should be made well. *Math. ix.* Accordingly approaching, though with Fear, she touch'd it, and was cured. Our Lord then said : Who has touch'd me ? When *Peter* answer'd, Lord, you see what Crouds press upon and molest you, and you ask, who has touch'd me ? Here consider the Patience of *Christ*, who suffers himself to be thus frequently molested and prest by the rude Populace. However our Lord well knew what he said, and therefore added, *I know that a Virtue proceeded from me. Luke vij.* *Martha* then manifested her Cure, and our Lord was pleased with curing her, with whom he was afterwards divinely intimate ; and told her, *Thy Faith hath made thee well.* Here again you have a fresh Commendation of Faith ; here likewise you see, that *Christ* is willing his Miracles should be made manifest for the Good of the Publick, and yet is so humble as to conceal the Part he has in them, attributing to the Merit of her Faith the Effects of his own divine Power.

Here too it is worth your Notice to observe what *St. Bernard* remarks. Every perfect Servant of *Christ*, says he, may be called the Hem or lowest Part of *Christ's* Garment, on account of the mean Opinion he has of himself. Let them therefore, who, arrived to this Pitch of Perfection, perceive that God hears their Prayers, and grants them the Cure of Diseases, or other miraculous Powers, take care not to be elated, nor attribute to themselves what is properly his Work and not theirs. For tho' *Martha* touch'd the Hem, with Hopes of be-

ing cured by the Touch, as she really was; yet the Virtue of the Cure came from the Lord, and not from the Hem: And therefore he said, *I know that a Virtue proceeded from me.* Mind this well then, and never attribute any Good to yourself, for it all comes from our Lord *Jesus*.

Our Saviour after this went to the House of the great Man abovemention'd, and finding that the Girl, whom he came to cure, was dead, he raised her again to Life. Here again recur to the general Heads of Contemplation, I have already proposed to you, and so often mention'd.



C H A P. XXVII.

Of the Conversion of the Magdalen, and other Things.

OUR gracious Lord, one Day, by the Invitation of *Simon* the Leper, went to dine with him, which he was accusom'd to do, out of his natural Courtesy, and the Zeal he had for the Salvation of Souls. *Luke vii.* Thus the divine *Jesus* attracted to himself those, for whose Sakes he came down from Heaven, by eating, and familiarly conversing among them. The Love of Poverty too was another Motive that induced him so to do. For he was extremely Poor, and had reserved nothing of earthly Substance for himself or those that belong'd to him. And therefore this Pattern of Humility, -

Humility, with Humility and Thanksgiving, accepted Invitations as Occasion required.

Magdalen, who probably had often heard him preach, and inwardly loved him, tho' she had yet given no Proofs of it, chanced to hear of our Saviour's dining at the House of this Leper. Wherefore, touch'd already with a real Sorrow at Heart for her Sins, convinced that he alone could rid her of them, and resolved no longer to delay her Conversion, she went strait to where our Saviour was, and with her Eyes and Face towards the Ground she pass'd by the whole Company, regardless of all till she came to her beloved Lord. Then throwing herself prostrate before him, with a certain secret Confidence, which her inward Love for him gave her, with a Torrent of Tears she began to bathe his sacred Feet, sighing, and tacitly saying in her Heart: Lord, I firmly believe, know, and confess you to be my God, and my Sovereign: I have offended your divine Majesty by many and great Transgressions, and have multiplied my Sins above the Number of the Sands of the Sea. But wicked Sinner as I am I fly to your Mercy for Refuge. I grieve and repent me from my Soul, I crave Pardon, am prepared to amend, and determin'd to conform my Life for the future to your blessed Precepts, without ever departing from them. Oh reject me not, turn me not away from you, I am sensible I can have recourse to none but you, and you alone I will and wish to recur to, for you alone I love above all things. Repulse me not then, but punish my Iniquities as you shall think proper, but yet grant me the Mercy I sue for.

All

All this while she kept bathing the blessed Feet of *Jesus*, with the plentiful Flood of her unhidden Tears. Hence you may see plainly that our Lord went always bare-footed.

*Christ
walked
bare-
footed.*

At length the illustrious Penitent, with becoming Resolution, stem'd her Tears awhile, and judging them unworthy to fall on our Lord's sacred Feet, she wiped them off with her stately Locks: Using her Hair to this Office, because she had nothing more precious with her for that Purpose, and because she wish'd to make those very Instruments of her former Vanity, instrumental to her present Conversion, besides that she wish'd not to remove her Face off the Feet of her divine Master. When she had wiped them dry, with her Lips she devoutly press'd them, with frequent Eagerness that spoke her growing Love; and afterwards anointed them with precious Ointments, as they were lean and fatigued with frequent and laborious Travelling. Behold her then attentively, consider maturely her Devotion, and dwell awhile on her Love to *Christ*, and his to her; and endeavour to be perfectly present at this Entertainment, which was very solemn in every Circumstance. Contemplate likewise the divine *Jesus* how benignly he receives, and how patiently he bears with all she does. He suspends his Dinner till she has done; and all the Guests are in Suspence at the Novelty. *Simon* could not help, judging our Saviour in his Mind, thinking he would not have suffer'd such a Woman to approach him if he had been a Prophet, and had known who she was. But our Lord soon shew'd his prophetic Power by answering *Simon's* Thoughts with the Parable of

of the Debtor. And, openly to shew that Love is the great End of all, concluded: *Many Sins are forgiven her, because she has greatly loved.* Luke vii. and then turning to her, Go, says he, *in Peace.* Oh, delightful and pleasing Sentence! How gladly did *Magdalen* hear it, and how joyfully retire! And now truly converted, she led ever after an innocent holy Life; and firmly adhered to the Service and Honour of him and his blessed Mother. Contemplate therefore, gentle Reader, these Circumstances with all the Devotion you can summon, and labour to imitate this Charity; which is so highly approved by our Lord *Jesus*, as well by Facts as in Words.

Here then you have an express Proof that Charity works a perfect Peace and Reconciliation between God and Sinners. Hence it is that St. *Peter* tells us, that *Charity covers a Multitude of Sins.* 1 Pet. iv. As Charity then is the Soul of every Virtue, and none are pleasing to God that are unanimated with Charity, I shall quote some Authorities to induce you to aim at the Acquisition of this great Virtue, in order to render yourself acceptable to the blessed *Jesus*. St. *Bernard* then says of it: This excellent Gift Charity must needs be of incomparable Worth, since the divine Spouse is so earnest in enforcing it to his new Bride. In one Place, saying: *In this all shall know, you are my Disciples, if you have love for one another.* Joh. xiii. In another, *I give you a new Precept, that you love one another.* Ibid. And again, *This is my Commandment, that you love one another.* Ibid. xv. Praying elsewhere that they may become one, as he and the Father are one. *A little lower the*

the Saint adds : What can we imagine comparable to this, which is prefer'd even to Martyrdom, and to a Faith sufficient to move Mountains. Thus then when I say to you, *Peace be with you.* John xx. I mean, may your Peace proceed to you from within yourselves, and then all that may seem to threaten you with Disturbance from without, will neither have Power to fright nor offend you.

The same Saint tells us : The Value of every Soul is rated by the Measure of its Charity : As for Example, the Soul that has much Charity is great and vast ; that which has but little is small and diminutive, nay nothing, for as the Apostle in his first to the *Corinthians*, chap. v. tells us, *If I have not Charity, I am nothing.* However, if it begins to possess even so slender a Portion, as to love where it is beloved, to salute Brethren, and those who salute, we cannot say that Soul is absolutely nothing. I will allow a Soul to be not quite nothing, if, at least, it returns Love for Love, and cultivates social Charity. And yet according to our Lord's Words, *how much more than nothing does it do ?* I cannot then, by any Means, think a Soul great, but rather very little and very contracted when I discover so slender a Portion of Charity in it. But if it grows up and improves so as, passing the narrow Limits of so contracted a Charity, to reach with Liberty of Spirit the utmost Bounds of gratuitous Bounty, by extending itself with Profuseness of good Will to every Neighbour, and by loving all as itself ; can we any longer say to it, *what dost thou do more ?* For a Soul, that dilates itself thus much, must have a Heart capacious enough to contain all Mankind,

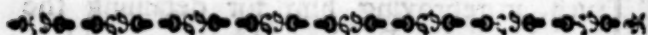
Mankind, even such as it is not tied to by Blood, Hopes of Interest; or any other Obligation, save that of which the Apostle speaks: *Owe No body any thing, but that ye love one another.* However if you will make farther Advances towards the pious Invasion of the Kingdom of Charity, and are desirous of carrying your Conquests to its farthest Confines, open the Bowels of your Compassion to your very Enemies, do Good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute and revile you, and study to be peaceful with those who hate Peace: Then, then indeed the Altitude and Latitude of the Heavens and of your Soul are alike, and their Beauty the same. Then will be fulfill'd in you what is sung of God, *extending the Heavens as a Skin.* Psal. ciii. And in this Heaven of your Soul, grown to so miraculous a Height, Width, and Beauty, the Most High will delight to inhabit, to expatiate; and manifest his Immenfity and Glory in. Thus far *St. Bernard.* You see then, pious Reader, how useful and necessary a Virtue is Charity, without which it is impossible to please God, and with which every one is sure to be agreeable in his Sight. Study therefore with all your Heart, with all your Mind, and with all your Forces to possess it. For this Possession will enable you to bear with Constancy, Courage, and Chearfulness, the greatest Hardships and Severities for the Sake of God and your Neighbour.

C H A P. XXVIII.

How John sent his Disciples to Jesus.

THAT glorious Combatant and Precursor of *Christ* St. *John* the Baptist was fetter'd in Prison, by Order of *Herod*, for the Defence of Truth, in reproving him for detaining the Wife of his living Brother. *Matth. xi.* Here it was that, desirous of committing his Disciples to the Care of our Lord *Jesus*, he thought of sending them on a Message to him, that hearing this divine Oracle's Words, and seeing the Wonders he wrought, they might be inflamed with the Love of him, and take to following him. Accordingly he dispatch'd them to *Jesus*, whom they ask'd in the Name of *John*: *Is it you who are to come, or are we to expect another?* Our Saviour was then amidst a great Multitude. Behold him then attentively, and see with what a pleasing Aspect he receives the Messengers of *John*, wisely answering them first in Deeds, and then in Words. In their Presence, then he cured the Deaf, the Dumb, the Blind, wrought many other Miracles, preach'd to the People, and then among other things told these Envoys, *Go, relate to John what you have heard and seen.* They gladly perform'd their Embassy, and related all to *John*, who as gladly received the joyful Tidings. And after the Death of *John* these Disciples firmly adher'd to *Christ*. After their Departure our Saviour bestow'd great Encomiums on *John* to the Multi-
L
tude,

tude, as that he was a Prophet, nay more than a Prophet, and that a greater than him had not appear'd among the Children of Women, and the like, as you may find in the Gospel. Contemplate then our divine Lord in every Situation whether preaching or teaching, or doing ought else, as I have already counsel'd you so often.



CHAP. XXIX.

Of the Death of St. John the Baptist.

HERE we may pause awhile in Meditation on the glorious End of *St. John* the Baptist. When therefore impious *Herod* and his infamous Adulterers had perhaps already plotted the Death of the Baptist, that they might escape the Reproaches due to their criminal Familiarity; it happen'd that at a publick Entertainment *Herodias*, the wretched Fruit of their incestuous Bed danced so much to the Satisfaction of *Herod*, that he gave her for a promised Recompence the Head of *John*. And in Consequence of this Grant, he was beheaded in the Prison. Behold here how great a Man is put to Death, and how basely and ignominiously is he murder'd by the Iniquity of a reigning Tyrant. Oh great God, how did you suffer this! What can be the Cause of the Death of so great a Man, one of such Perfection and Sanctity

city as to be taken for *Christ*? But if you would digest this well, consider first the Baseness and Barbarity of his Murderers, and then meditate on the singular Greatness and Eminence of *John*, and you will find fresh Matter of Surprise. You have already heard above, the many and great Encomiums bestow'd upon him, by our divine Saviour; now hear what Applauses St. *Bernard* gives him in his Panegyric on him. That Mother and Mistress of all Churches, the *Roman Church*, says he, of which it is said: *I have pray'd for thee, Peter, that thy Faith fail not*, next after the Name of our Saviour, received her Consecration and Badge in Honour of St. *John* the Baptist. It was indeed fit that the singular Friend of his beloved Spouse should pass thither when she was to be raised to her sovereign Dignity. *Peter* was crucified, *Paul* was beheaded, but the Dignity of Preference was still given to the Precursor. The Purple of *Rome* is the Blood of Martyrs, the sovereign Honour belongs to that Holy Patriarchat. Still *John* is every where greater, singularly wonderful in all things and above all. Who was ever so gloriously proclaim'd? Who was so amply replenish'd with the Holy Ghost in the Womb of his Mother? Who else exulted in the Womb of his Mother? Whose Nativity does the Church solemnize besides his? Who was ever so fond of the Solitude of a Desert? Who was ever known to converse so sublimely? Who was the first Preacher of Penance, and the Kingdom of Heaven? *John*. Who baptized the King of Glory? *John*. Who

plainly reveal'd the sacred Mystery of the Trinity? *John*. To whom did *Christ* ever give Testimony but to *John*? And finally to whom after *Christ* and his Mother does the Church pay so much Honour as to *John*? *John* is a Patriarch, nay the last, and Head of all Patriarchs: *John* is a Prophet, nay more than a Prophet: For him, whose Coming he foretells, he points out with his Finger: *John* is an Angel, and the chosen among Angels; our Saviour testifying it of him, saying, *Behold I send my Angel, &c. John i.* *John* is an Apostle, and the first of Apostles, and their Prince; and the first of God's Messengers: *John* is an Evangelist, and Preacher of the Gospel; but the first in that Office: *John* is a Virgin, nay the illustrious Pattern of all Virgins. The Title-spring of Purity, and Mirror of Chastity: *John* is a Martyr, and the Encouragement of other Martyrs: And the Soul of Martyrdom from the Birth to the Death of *Christ*: He the Voice crying in the Desert, he the Forerunner of the Judge, and the Herald of the DIVINE WORD. He is *Elias*, and till his Coming the Law and the Prophets were so many Lamps that beam'd forth brightly and warmly their benefic Influence. I pass over in Silence the Proficiency he made in angelic Perfections, by which he not only imitated every Degree of that heavenly Hierarchy, but even emulated the Highest in seraphick Wisdom and Virtue. Thus far *St. Bernard*. Now hear that holy Archbishop of *Ravenna* *St. Peter Chrysogonus*, in a Panegyric on the Day of his Decollation.

The

The Life of the Baptist, says he, is the School of Virtue, the Mastership of Life, the Plan of Sanctity, and the Model of Justice, &c. If therefore you compare the Excellence of Merit, and Eminence of Dignity in *John*, with the Littleness and groveling Baseness of those who beheaded him, you cannot help being surpris'd. What shall a common Hangman (the basest of human Species) be empower'd to take away the Life of so great, so good, a Personage as if he was the meanest and most execrable Highwayman or Murderer! Behold him then, with Reverence and Concern: How readily he stoops his Neck to the Command of this vile and reprobate Butcher; how humbly he bends his Knees, and, giving Thanks to God, lays his Neck on the Block, and patiently received the repeated Strokes of the barbarous Executioner. Thus departs the Baptist, that intimate Friend, near Relation, and Familiar of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. Oh! what a Confusion is this for us, who, at the least Visit of a trivial Adversity, lose all Sight of Patience. *John*, innocent *John*, meets Death, and such a Death with Chearfulness; and we stain'd and spotted with Sin, and worthy the divine Indignation, are unable to sustain the least Contradictions, or Indignities, tho' but in bare Words.

Our Saviour was absent from the City, when *John* was beheaded, though still in *Judea*. But when his Death was publish'd, our divine Lord wept for him, as did his Disciples, and the blessed Virgin who had nursed him in his most tender Infancy, and who still loved him with extreme Affection. Our blessed Redeemer,

however, consoled her, with telling her, that it was expedient he should die for the Defence of the Justice of his heavenly Father, that he would soon receive the Reward of his Sufferings in Heaven; and that it was not the Will of the Almighty to award his Saints from Death, since they are not design'd for this World: Their Kingdom and Country not being earthly, but celestial. *John* is freed from the Chains of the Body, and the Powers of Death have no more Force to retain him on Earth, or to detain him from the Kingdom of Heaven, whither he will soon be transferr'd to reign with my Father. Be then of good Heart, oh dearly beloved Mother, all is well with your favourite Baptist. Soon after this *Christ* retired from these Parts to *Galilee*. Dwell, gentle Reader, on the preceeding Subjects, endeavour to render yourself present to them, contemplate them devoutly, and when you have compleated your Meditation on these Heads, as God shall be pleased to inspire you, proceed to others, and follow your blessed Saviour, Step by Step, whitherever he goes.



C H A P.

C H A P. XXX.

Of the Conference our Lord Jesus had with the Samaritan Woman, as he sat, being faint and wearied, by the Side of the Well to rest himself.

IT happened upon a certain time that as our Lord Jesus was going from the Country of Judea into Galilee, he passed thro' the Country of Samaria, and being wearied with the Fatigue of his Journey, which was about the Space of fifteen Miles, he sat down to rest himself by the Side of a Well in the Way, which is called the Well of Jacob. Consider here, pious Christian, thy God, and contemplate awhile how he is pleased to condescend to be tired, and faint for thy Sake. He frequently travel'd, was often wearied, and his whole Life was laborious, painful, and full of Troubles.

While our Lord sat thus by the Well's Side, his Disciples went into the next Town to provide Meat to refresh themselves: In the mean time there came a Woman of that Country, whose Name was Lucia, to draw Water from the Well: With whom our Lord began to discourse, and to manifest himself unto her talking of many, great, and sublime Mysteries. What the Particulars of this Discourse was, how his Disciples return'd again unto him; and how, by the Woman's Relation of him, the People of the City came out to him, and detain'd him with them for many Days together,

and how, at last, he departed from them I shall wholly omit, and pass by at present, it being clearly set forth at large in the Gospel of St. *John*; to which I refer you, there fixedly to contemplate every Action of our Lord *Jesus*. For concerning the Doctrine which, for our Instruction, may be gather'd from this Part of sacred History, there are many Things concerning our Lord *Jesus* which are worthy our greatest Notice and Attention. And *first*, his great Meekness, in that our most humble Lord would vouchsafe to remain alone while his Disciples were gone into the City to buy Provision. *Secondly*, He disdain'd not to converse with that low and simple Woman, and to treat with her of such sublime and sacred Mysteries, as though he had been discoursing of them, in the Presence of the most learned and wise Men. This ought to reprove and confound the Pride of the more learned, who imagine their Labour and Pains were lost in bestowing their Words swell'd with Vanity, upon a few, or only on one Person, esteeming so slender an Audience unworthy to receive the Exposition of their sublime Doctrine. *Thirdly*, we may consider his great Poverty, Mortification of the Flesh, and Humility: His Disciples brought him Meat from the City, and desired him to eat: But where did he eat? Without the City, in the open Air, and at the Well's Side, drinking of the Water to quench his Thirst. And in this poor and humble Manner, being weary, faint, and hungry, he refresh'd himself. Neither are we to imagine, that it was only once, or by Chance that this happened to him, but that it

was his usual Custom so to do. For we may well suppose, that our most humble Lord travel'd thro' all the Countries, in the same Manner, and that, tho' ever so faint and wearied, he oftentimes took his small Refection, without the Towns and Habitations of the People, near some Well or River, having neither delicate Meats, curious Plates, or delicious Wines, but the pure Element, from the River or Fountain, was his chief and only Liquor. He who makes the Vineyard abundantly fruitful, the Springs to flow with Plenty, and gives Life to all that move in the Waters, was humbly contented, like another poor Man, with Bread and Water only, upon the bare Ground. We may likewise contemplate how intent our Lord *Jesus* was in the Study of heavenly Things, and of such as regarded more the Soul than the Body: For being asked by his Disciples to eat of those Meats which they had brought him, he answer'd them, saying: *I have Meat to eat, that you know not—my Meat is to do the Will of him that sent me*, John iv. Wherefore he waited till the People of the City came, that he might preach to them, desiring first to perform that which appertained to the Nourishment of their Souls, before that which belong'd to the Refreshment of his own Body, notwithstanding the great Necessity he had for it. Contemplate well these things, and endeavour with all your Study to imitate his Virtues.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXXI.

How the Disciples of our Lord Jesus pluck'd the Ears of Corn, and eat them for Hunger on the Sabbath.

AS the Disciples of our Lord Jesus pass'd through the Fields with him on the Sabbath-Day, where Corn was growing, they pluck'd the Ears, and rubb'd them between their Hands, and eat them for Hunger. The Pharisees (who watch'd every Word and Action of our Lord, that they might find an Occasion of accusing him of some Breach of their Law) reproved both him and his Disciples for it, saying: *Thy Disciples do that which is not lawful for them to do on the Sabbath-Days.* Matth. xii. But our Lord to excuse them, *First*, brought the Example of *David* and his Companions, who when they were Hungry eat the Bread of the Proposition. *Have you not read*, said he, *what David did when he was Hungry, and they that were with him: How he enter'd into the House of God, and did eat the Loaves of Proposition which were not lawful for him to eat, nor for them that were with him; but for Priests only?* *Secondly*, That the Priests of the Law on the Sabbath-Day circumcised and offer'd Sacrifice, which are both corporal Works. *Have ye not read in the Law* (said he again) *that on the Sabbath-Days the Priests in the Temple do break the Sabbath, and are without Blame?* Ibid. And what might have served for the greatest Excuse, and

JESUS CHRIST.

171

and indeed the only one was : That the Lord of the Creation was himself present there, who was the Author and Master of the Law, and therefore could give them leave to break it.

Let us now devoutly consider, and take Compassion on the great Necessity of the Disciples, tho' in Company of their Lord, who is the sovereign God and Master of all things. If we duly reflect on it we cannot chuse but be inspired with the Love of Poverty, and corporal Distress for his Sake. For is it not strange to think that they, who by a singular Prerogative were chosen to the sublime Degree of the Apostleship, and made the Princes of the World, should be obliged for Hunger to eat the Ears of Corn as if they were not Men, but irrational and senseless Animals ; and this too in the Presence of him, who is the Creator of all things, and who bountifully feeds and provides for every Creature ; and yet he sees them suffer such Want without bestowing his Relief, as if he were not able to help them ? But our most gracious and merciful Lord, who wrought all things for our greater Example, and for the Good our of Salvation, suffer'd them to be thus needy and poor for the Accomplishment of his greatest Designs, as he himself also had assumed the Nature of Man, with all the Infirmities incident to it, but yet without Sin. Wherefore tho' he had Compassion on them, in this their Hunger and Distress, inasmuch as he was moved to it by the tender Love he bore them ; nevertheless he was pleased with it, as he saw the good Will with which they suffer'd, that is, out of pure Love and Affection to him.

And

And here all such as have forsaken the World, for the Love of our blessed Lord, have a perfect Model from which they may copy all those Virtues which are necessary for them to follow, that is, Patience in Distress, true Poverty of Spirit, and the Virtue of Abstinence, contrary to the Vice of Gluttony. And *first*, as to Patience in all our Necessities and Wants: Seeing that the Disciples of our Lord *Jesus*, who had quitted all they had possessed to follow him, suffer'd with Chearfulness and Patience such great Distress in his Presence, whom they saw fed and relieved miraculously many Thousands of other Men, how much more ought we to be patient in the like Necessities, when it shall please his divine Goodness to afflict us with them? Since we are neither so deserving his Favours as they were, nor are we so perfectly establish'd in his Love, but rather on the contrary have deserved, for our Impatience and Ingratitude to so bountiful a God, much greater Punishments, and many more Wants than his Goodness permits us to suffer, who perhaps has never yet suffer'd us to know any Want at all.

Secondly, As to what relates to a perfect Poverty: You are to understand that the Poverty of our Lord *Jesus*, without any Comparison, far excell'd in Perfection the voluntary Poverty of any other Person. For such who for the Love of *Christ* have forsaken all the Riches and Preferments of this transitory Life, their Poverty is generally in great Repute with Wordlings, and is commended and esteem'd by them as a sublime and noble Virtue. But the Poverty of our blessed Lord was ever held in Contempt by all; inasmuch

as it was unknown to the World that he voluntarily submitted to it, wherefore they esteem'd it to be of meer Necessity, and what he could not avoid ; as seems to appear both in him and his Disciples, who were constrain'd through Hunger to pluck and eat the Ears of Corn : And as that Poverty, which we suffer not by Choice but thro' Necessity, is too often reckon'd a contemptible thing : So likewise was that of our blessed Lord ; for such as knew him, saw, that he had neither a House nor Habitation wherein to repose or put his Head, which drew upon him the Contempt and Disesteem of all that beheld him. This we may gather from the too general Practice of Mankind, who conceive the utmost Contempt, in Regard to the poor and distress'd ; but if with Patience and Resignation they submit to the divine Will, in Reality are most worthy and pleasing in the Sight of him, who left them this glorious Example : Hence, it is a most dangerous and execrable Sin to despise any Man in his Poverty or Misery. The truly Poor, however, are not such only who have forsaken all temporal Riches, and make an outward Shew and Profession of voluntary Poverty, but they, who to this add the Poverty of Spirit, that is, desire no Plenty, nor seek any more Comfort in the perishable Goods of this Life, than just as much as may suffice to support the Infirmities of Nature. For, if he that is poor remains so only for Want of an Opportunity of enjoying the Goods and Plenty of Fortune, such a one has no Share in the holy Poverty of our Lord Jesus, but rather lives in Poverty, Misery, and Distress in this Life, without

without any Merit of an eternal Reward in the next. This is the true Description of a perfect Poverty, concerning which Virtue *St. Bernard* speaks at large in his Sermon upon the Nativity of our Lord *Jesus*.

Thirdly, as to the Virtue of Abstinence, we may gather most powerful Examples both from the Disciples of our Lord, and from our Lord *Jesus* himself. Gluttony is a Vice against which we must struggle during our whole Life. This we are taught by the holy Fathers who, by a long Experience, were true Judges of its dangerous and repeated Assaults. And this more especially *St. Bernard*, who in many Places tells us, how much we ought to shun that Vice, and to nourish the Body, so far only as is necessary for its Support. For whatever we allow it more than this (by feeding our Lust, and exceeding our present Necessities) we expose ourselves to the Danger of Death both of Soul and Body; being so often overcome, that, like irrational and senseless Brutes, we prefer the Satisfaction of our greedy Appetites to the Preservation of Health, by taking such Meats and Drinks, in so great an Excess, as we know cannot but occasion many Disorders within us: so that not only the Body remains indisposed to serve God, but also, the Soul is therewith so much defiled that we cannot recur to God with that Purity and Cleanness of Heart as is becoming us.

Seeing then, that the Vice of Gluttony is of so dangerous a Consequence, and so much condemn'd by the Fathers, we must endeavour to shun it in all we can, and obtain the Virtue of Abstinence, which we may learn from the Ex-

ample

ample of our blessed Lord, of his Disciples, and other Saints, who have taught us to subdue our Flesh, and keep it in Subjection by temperate Food, and such a Degree of Abstinence as may be guided by the Virtue of Discretion, which as *St. Bernard* saith is not only a Virtue itself, but also the Director of all other Virtues, inasmuch as where this is wanting, that which may seem to be Virtue is only Vice. And *St. Gregory* saith: That Discretion is the Mother and Preserver of all other Virtues. Which Discretion, in relation to Abstinence, and the Nourishing of our Bodies, consists in this (as *St. Augustin* teacheth in his Book of Confessions) that a Man ought to use the same Moderation in eating and drinking for the Nourishment of his Body, as he would use in taking of a Medicine for the Cure of an Infirmary. For as in taking Physick we should take such a Portion or Quantity as is sufficient for healing our Sores, or the curing our Decease, so likewise as Hunger and Thirst became the Infirmities of Mankind by the Transgression of *Adam*, Meat and Drink, which are Medicines appointed for the curing of these Infirmities, ought to be taken only in such a Proportion as is conducive to that End.

Thus much may suffice of the Virtue of Abstinence, and the Vice contrary to it which is Gluttony, which I have here taken Occasion to treat of, from the Hunger our Lord *Jesus* and his Disciples sustain'd, and the Poorness of their small Refection, who, for our Example, both here and in the Desert began vigorously to oppose, and fight against the Sin of Gluttony.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXXII.

How the Jews, having driven our Lord Jesus out of the City to the Top of a steep Mountain, endeavour'd to throw him down from thence.

WHEN our Lord *Jesus* was again return'd to the City of *Nazareth* the *Jews* desir'd to see him work some Miracles, but our Lord shewing them by many Reasons how unworthy they were of such Signs, being vehemently enraged against him, they drove him out of the City, and our most humble Lord closely pursued, meekly fled before them. Their Fury was so much increas'd and kindled against him that they drove him to the Top of a high Mountain that they might thence have an Opportunity of throwing him down headlong. Our Lord *Jesus* however, by the Power of his sacred Divinity, pass'd through the Midst of them, and went his Way ; for the Time was not yet come in which he had chosen to die. Contemplate him here, devout Reader, flying from his Enemies, and hiding himself under a Rock to save himself from their Fury, compassionate him in his Sufferings, and endeavour to follow his Steps, in the Practice of Humility and Patience.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXXIII.

Of the Man that had a wither'd Hand, and was cur'd by our Lord Jesus.

AS our Lord *Jesus* was teaching in the Synagogue on one of the Sabbath-Days, there was a certain Man whose Right-hand was wither'd, whom our blessed Lord made to stand in the Midst of the Doctors, and said to them, is it lawful or not to do good on the Sabbath-Day? But they made him no Answer. He said therefore to the Man: Stretch forth thy Hand, and it was immediately restored. Our divine Saviour was oftentimes pleased to work Miracles on the Sabbath-Days to confound the Perfidiousness of the *Jews*, who interpreted the Law according to the Flesh, which he would have to be observ'd according to the Spirit. The Law did not forbid the Performance of good Works, and Acts of Charity were not forbid by the Law to be done, on the Sabbath-Day, but the committing of Sins, and servile Works. They however were greatly scandalized, and conspired against him, and said: This Man is not of God who keeps not the Sabbath. Our Lord *Jesus*, notwithstanding, did not desist from working Miracles on the Sabbath, but rather wrought them more frequently, on purpose to undeceive them, and to convince them of their Error. Consider him then, pious Christian, in the Exercise of the before-mention'd charitable and good Actions, and according to his Example never omit the doing any good

M

Work

Work on Account of others being unjustly scandalized. For the Fear of such Scandal ought never to make us desist from those Works which are necessary for the Salvation of a Soul, or are Helps to its spiritual Advancement in Perfection. Though 'tis true, that sometimes to avoid the Scandal of our Neighbour, according to the Prescription of perfect Charity, we should abstain from some temporal Satisfaction of the Body rather than offend him. Wherefore the Apostle, to the Romans, says: *It is good not to eat Flesh, and not to drink Wine, nor that wherein thy Brother is offended, or scandalized, or weakened.* Rom. xiv.



C H A P. XXXIV.

Of the Multiplication of the Loaves, and how our Lord Jesus provides for those who truly love him.

THE Holy Scripture tells us, that at two different Times our Lord Jesus wrought the Miracle of the Multiplication of a few Loaves with which he not only fed, but fully satisfy'd many Thousands of People. Do you however, Christian Reader, reduce them both to one Meditation: And attentively consider the Words and Actions of Christ our Saviour, as they are related in the holy Gospel. *I have Compassion (saith he) on this Multitude, because*

now

now three Days they have continued with me. Neither have they what to eat, and if I dismiss them fasting to their Home, they will faint in the Way: For some of them came afar off. Mark viii. After which he multiplied the Loaves, and they all eat and were satisfied. If we duly consider these Words, together with the Miracle that he wrought, we shall find (for our spiritual Instruction) many good Motives to love and praise his holy Name: And more especially for that our Lord *Jesus* here shew'd himself to be most singularly good and merciful, most kind and courteous, most discreet and circumspect.

And *First*, That he was most merciful appears in the Words he spoke, saying: *I have Compassion on the Multitude.* Whereby it is plain, that it was his pure Mercy alone that moved him to feed and satisfy them in their great Hunger and Necessity; for as the royal Prophet witnesseth: *All the Earth is full of his Mercy.* Psal. xxxii.

Secondly, He plainly shew'd his wonderful Kindness and Courtesy in the Words which immediately follow: *For lo (saith he) now these three Days they have continued with me, and have nothing to eat.* Holding himself, as it were, obliged to them for remaining with him those three Days, when indeed, on the contrary, it was for their own Good and Advantage, and not for his, save only that out of his endless bounty his Desire was, as he himself affirms in another Place, to dwell with the Sons of Men, and be conversant with them for their salvation: For they that follow him by a good life, and are desirous to hearken to his Doctrine,

trine, and keep his Commandments, he most singularly loves and never withdraws his bountiful Hand from them, but ever succours and relieves them in their Necessities.

Thirdly, Our blessed Lord shew'd his great Discretion and Circumspection, for seeing that many of the People were come to him from distant Parts, and considering their Necessities, and that it was dangerous to dismiss them again fasting, he said : *If I dismiss them fasting to their Home they will faint in the Way* : Consider how full of Sweetness and heavenly Comfort were these Words. The same daily happens to us. For we have not of ourselves, wherewith to sustain either Body or Soul, unless he please to give it us, and we should faint in our Way, should he leave us to ourselves, for without him we cannot attain to any spiritual Blessing, so that we have no Reason to glory in ourselves when we experience any Comfort in our spiritual Exercises : Since it is not our own but all comes from him. And therefore, if we duly reflect, we shall find that the true Servants of God, the more perfect they were in a holy Life, the nearer to God, and the more excellently rich in the Gifts of his divine Grace ; so much the more humble were they in their own Eyes, attributing nothing to themselves but Misery, Wretchedness, and Sin. For the nearer any one approaches to God, the more he is illuminated : And therefore more plainly discovers the great Goodness and Mercy of God, so that Pride and Vain-glory, which proceed from Ignorance and spiritual Blindness, can have no Place or Residence in their Soul : For he can have no Reason to be proud who truly knows God.

JESUS CHRIST.

181

God, and thoroughly examines into his own State. But to return: 'Tis certain, that we come from afar off, when we come to God, this I speak in Regard to myself, and to such as are like to me, who have gone so far astray from God by the Sins we have committed. Wherefore whoever returns again to him may be truly said to come a long Way. But after that *Christ* had spoke the abovementioned Words he thence proceeded to Deeds.

Behold him then now, pious Reader, how he takes the Loaves in his Hands, and, having given Thanks to God, gives them to his Disciples to set before the Multitude, and multiplied them in such a Manner in their Hands that every one eat as much as they cared for, so as to be fully satisfied, and there still remain'd many Baskets full of Scraps. Consider likewise how he looks on them while they eat, and is pleased in beholding the Satisfaction they receive from this Reflection. And they at the same time, admiring the Wonderfulness of this Miracle, fed both their Mind and Body, rendering Praise and Thanksgiving to their Benefactor, and with Joy repeated to each other the wonderful Works of his Mercy. Whether the blessed Virgin was present there or not the holy Scripture makes no mention: Do you however, Christian Reader, meditate on this Subject in the Manner as your Devotion shall direct you, and God shall please to inspire you.

M 3

CHAP.

C H A P. XXXV.

Of our Lord's Flight when they would have made him King: And against worldly Honours in general.

WHEN our Lord had fed the Multitude, as we have seen in the preceeding Chapter, they sought to make him King. For they consider'd that he was capable of supplying their Wants, and therefore they wisely concluded that they could not be in Want of any thing under such a King. But our Lord *Jesus*, knowing their Design, fled from them to the Mountains unperceptibly to them, so that they could not find him. *Christ* then would not accept temporal Honours. And observe how truly and unfeignedly he labours to shun them: He sends his Disciples by Sea, and goes himself up to the Mountains, that if they should persist in pursuing him, as they would probably do it by following his Disciples, they might search for him in vain among them. The Disciples indeed would not have left our Lord, but that he compell'd them so to do. It was undoubtedly a pious Disposition in them, to desire to remain with *Christ*, but more pious yet to leave him for a time out of Obedience to his Will. Observe then, and meditate with what inward Regret they depart from him, and not till he urges them to it, by signifying it to be his divine Pleasure; after which they comply, and to shew their Humility and

and entire Submission to his Commands, go on Board the Vessel without him, however perilous and grievous it be to them. Thus does *Christ* act daily with us in a spiritual Manner, by our own good Will we would never have *Christ* absent from us, but his Pleasure is otherwise; he comes into our Souls, and is absent, at times, when and as he pleases, but ever for our Good. Hear therefore what St. *Bernard* says upon this Subject. After the divine Spouse has been long sought for with continued Vigils and Prayers, and copious Floods of Tears, when he seems to be within Reach of his pursuing Spouse, he again escapes; and again coming up to his weeping Pursuer suffers himself to be taken, but not retain'd, flying as it were from her Arms in the very Minute when she embraces him; yet if the faithful Soul devoutly persists in her Pursuit of him with Prayers and Tears, he will again, at length, return to her, and *not disappoint her of the Wish of her Lips*. Psal. xx. But again will he disappear, and remain unseen, till again he be sought after with the whole Affection. Thus while the Soul is confin'd to this mortal Body, it has frequently the Joy of its Spouse's Presence; but that Joy is not compleat, since, tho' his Visitations rejoice her frequently, the frequent Vicissitudes of Absence gives her equal Pain. And this the Beloved must endure, till having thrown off her corporeal Burden she shall be able to fly, rais'd on the Pinions of her Wishes, wafted over the Plains of Contemplation, and rapidly following her heavenly Spouse whithersoever he goes. Neither shall every Soul attain to this, but such only as by extraordinary Devotion, vehement Desire, and tender Affec-

tion proves herself a true Spouse of *Christ*, and worthy, that, taking upon him the Form of a Spouse, he should visit her in the nuptial Ornaments of his Grace. And elsewhere the same Saint says, Perhaps he therefore withdrew himself, that he might be recall'd the more earnestly, and the more ardently retain'd. For thus he once feign'd to be going farther, not that he intended so to do so much, as to be invited to stay, with that tender Sollicitation, *Stay with us, for it is growing late in the Evening.* Luke xxiv. And immediately he adds, This Kind of pious Feint, or rather salutary Dispensation of Providence, which the incorporeal Word corporally express'd to the Body, the Spirit frequently, in a special Manner peculiar to itself, makes use of, to exercise a truly devout Soul. Passing by, he means to be stopt; going away, he is willing to be recall'd: His Departure is a Dispensation of his Providence, his Return is ever the Purpose of his Will, and both are the Effects of infinite Wisdom, the great Ends of which he alone can fathom. Experience shews that the Soul is frequently exercised with these Vicissitudes of the Absence and Presence of the Divine Word, and he himself spoke as much: *I go and I return to you.* John xiv. and likewise, *A little while and you shall not see me, and again a little while, and you shall see me.* Ibid. xvi. Oh the little while, and no little while! Oh the short Space, and tediously long Duration, beloved Lord! Do you call it a little while, when we are not to see you? With humblest Submission to your sacred Words, oh Lord, 'tis a long, a tediously long, and heavy Age to lose Sight of you but

for

for an Instant. Yet both are true in different Senses. An Age of your Absence is but a little while, if our Merit only be considered; but if compared to our Wishes, every Moment is a tedious Age. This the Prophet hints at, saying, *If he should delay, wait for him: Because he will come and not tarry.* Hab. xi. How will he not tarry, if he should delay Coming, unless it be that his Coming will be expeditious with Respect to our Deserts, tho' slow with Regard to our Desires? Now the amorous Soul is waisted by Desire, and drawn on by Affection, overlooks its Merits, shuts its Eyes to dazzling Majesty, opens them to spiritual Joy, fixes its Hope in Salvation, and in that confidently proceeds. Made intrepid at length by Hope she boldly recalls the Divine Word, and confidently invites the Object of her Delight, calling him, with usual Liberty, not her Lord but her beloved Spouse, *Return, my Beloved, return.* Cantic. i. And in another Place, God never ceases (says the same Saint) to exercise with such Vicissitudes those who lead a spiritual Life, or rather those whom he intends to lift to Spirituality, visiting them betimes, and early proving them. Thus far St. Bernard.

You have seen then, gentle Reader, how our Lord *Jesus* alternately visits the Soul, and departs from it in a spiritual Sense, and how the Soul ought to behave under either Circumstance. She must earnestly and fervently solicit his Return, yet patiently bear his Absence, after the Example of the Disciples, who out of Obedience to him enter the Vessel without him, and bear up against the Storms that

that threaten them; with Hopes of his Succour to deliver them. But now let us return to our Lord Jesus.

When the Disciples had put off to Sea, he went alone up to the Mountains, and thus escaped the Hands of them who sought after him. You see with what Care and Study our Lord fled from the Honour of a worldly Crown. And what did he this for, but to set an Example for you to follow? His Flight then was not so much for his own sake as for ours. For he well knew what Rashness the Ambition of worldly Honours must hurry us into. For such Honours are the greatest Snare, I know, that can be laid to entangle us, and the strongest Battery that can be planted for the Subversion of our Souls, whether it consists in the Precedency of Power, Ecclesiastic or Secular, of Authority or Learning. For it is almost impossible for Men to delight in Honours, without standing in imminent Danger, and tottering as it were on the Brink of a steep Precipice; nay, rather should I say, without being already rolling down it; and that for many Reasons. *First*, Because the Mind that is once delighted with Honours is wholly engrossed by them, and thinks on nothing but conserving and improving them; and St. Gregory, in his 30th *Homily*, observes, “that every one is so much “the more alienated from the Love of the Supreme Being as he is delighted with inferior “Objects.” *Secondly*, Because he is quite taken up with procuring a Multitude of Friends, Acquaintances, and Correspondents, by whose Means and Assistance he may add to his Honours, and consequently must comply with many Things

Things incompatible with Conscience and God's Pleasure, out of mere Complaisance to them from whose Familiarity he expects such Advantages. *Thirdly*, He envies those who are possessed of the Honours he covets, and generally detracts from their Merit, and thus falls into Envy and Scandal. *Fourthly*, He thinks himself, and would have others esteem him worthy Honours, and thus becomes vain and arrogant. When, according to the Apostle, *He, who thinks himself something, when he is really nothing, deceives himself.* Gal. vi. And therefore *Christ* says, *When you have done all Things well, say, we are useless Servants,* Luke xvii. But when does an ambitious Man say this? *Fifthly*, He walks not according to the Spirit, but according to the Flesh, and has not his Heart raised and united to Heaven, but leaves it loose and dissipated with Variety of earthly Objects. *Sixthly and lastly*, When once a Man suffers in himself a Relish of Ambition for Honours, he is so allured by them as never to be satiated, and daily hankering after new ones, the more he obtains, the more he covets to obtain: Because he vainly conceits himself to be more than ordinarily honourable, and worthy in the Esteem of others as well as his own. Thus does he deliver himself up a Prey to Ambition, the worst of Vices, and the Mother of many. But to convince you of the Malice of this Vice, let St. *Bernard* speak for me.

Ambition, says he, is a subtle Evil, a secret Poison, a hidden Pestilence, the Author of all Guile, the Mother of all Hypocrisy, the Monster-getting Parent of Rancour, the Moth of all Virtues, the Canker-worm of Sanctity, the Hardener

Hardener of Hearts, creating Diseases from their Cures, engendering Sickneſs from Medicines; and deſtroying all, whom it baſely ſupplants, as the latent Enemy undermines a City to involve its Inhabitants in the Ruins of it. And what nourishes this dangerous Vermin but the Diſſipation of the Mind and the Oblivion of Truth; as what diſcovers this lurking Traitor, and unkennels this Worker of Darkneſs but the Light of Truth? Such is that Truth which ſays, *What does it avail a Man, if he gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul?* Mat. xvi. And again, *The Powerful ſhall ſuffer Torments powerfully,* Wiſd. vi. It is this ſame Truth that gives a Man to reflect, how trivial is the Comfort in Ambition, how grievous the Judgment attending it, how brief is its Enjoyment, and how obſcure its End. And therefore the third Temptation, which Satan tried our Lord with, was Ambition, when he proffer'd him all the Kingdoms of the World, to fall down and adore him. You ſee then that Ambition is the Worſhip of the Devil, for which he promiſes his Adorers in Recompence, to lead them to worldly Honours and Glory. *In another Place the Saint ſays,* We are fond indeed of riſing, and covet to be exalted. For we are by Nature noble Creatures, and of a certain Greatneſs of Soul, and therefore it is natural in us to wiſh to be elevated. Yet Woe to us if we follow him, who ſays, *I will ſit on the Mount of the Teſtament, in the Skirts of the North,* Iſaiah xiv. Oh Wretch! in the Skirts of the North! That is too frigid a Mount, however thou mayſt covet Power and Eminence, we will not follow thee thither. Yet how many to this very Day follow thy foul and fatal Steps.

nay, how few escape being enslaved by the Lust
 of Power ! Oh unhappy Creatures, whom do you
 thus follow, who is your Guide ? Is not this
 the Mount to which the Angel ascended, and
 fell a Devil ? Are you not aware that after his
 Fall, tortured with Envy, and wickedly anxi-
 ous to supplant Mankind, he shew'd them a
 like Eminence, telling them, *You shall be like
 Gods, knowing Good and Evil*, Gen. iii. *And a
 little after the Saint adds*, Such the Power of
 Ambition, to deprive an Angel of angelic Feli-
 city. So the Ambition of Knowledge strip'd
 Man of the Glory of Immortality. Let a Man
 try to ascend the Steep of Power, how many
 Opponents, think you, he will meet with,
 how many Repulses, and how difficult a Road
 will he find ? And suppose he should attain the
 Summit of his Wishes, what has he wished ?
The Powerful shall be powerfully tormented, Wisd.
 vi. so that it is needless to enter into a Detail of
 the present Sollicitudes and Anxieties which
 Power produces. One is ambitious of bloating
 Knowledge, what Labour must he not go thro',
 what Anxiety of Spirit, and still shall hear, *tho'
 thou burst thyself, thou shalt not overtake it*.
 His Eyes shall be bathed in Bitterness as often
 as he sees one whom he thinks himself inferior
 to, or fancies that others do. What if he
 swells himself with Conceit ? *I will destroy*, says
 the Lord, *the Wisdom of the Wise, and reprove
 the Prudence of the Prudent*, 1 Cor. i. But to
 say no more, You have seen, I fancy, how
 much the Steep of Ambition, and Thirst of
 Knowledge, and Power is to be shunn'd, by
 such as are any ways terrified at the Fall of one
 Angel, and the Ruin of Man. *Mountains of
 Gelboe,*

Galboe neither Snow nor Rain shall fall upon you,
 Yet what shall we do, it behoves us to ascend,
 we are born, and imbibed with a Desire of Ele-
 vation, who then shall teach us a salutary As-
 cent? Who but he who tells us, that he who is
 descended, he likewise is ascended? It is to
 him we are to apply to learn the right Ascent,
 that we may not follow the Footsteps of that
 evil Guide, or rather Seducer. For seeing that
 no one ascended, He the Most High descended,
 and by his Descent secured to us an easy and
 safe Ascent. He descended from the Mount
 of Power, in suffering himself to be encircled
 with the Infirmities of the Flesh; he descended
 from the Mount of Science, in the Simplicity of
 his Preaching, to save all such as should sincerely
 believe. In reality, what can seem more weak
 than the little tender Body and Limbs of an
 Infant? What more void of Science than a
 Child? Who less powerful than one whose
 Limbs are nail'd to a Tree, and whose very
 Bones are enumerated? And who would be
 thought less wise than one who should volun-
 tarily part with his Life, and make Satisfaction
 for Damages he had not done? Thus you see
 how much He who descended lessen'd and
 lower'd himself beneath worldly Power and
 Wisdom. Nor could he ascend higher than he
 did in Charity and Goodness. But where is
 the Wonder that *Christ* should climb by de-
 scending, when we have seen Men and Angels
 precipitate by attempting to rise. The same Saint
 says elsewhere, Oh perverse Ambition of the
 Sons of *Adam*! Though it be a laborious Task
 to ascend and an easy Matter to descend, they
 climb with Levity and descend with Difficulty,

prone

prone to Honours and even to Ecclesiastical Dignities, a too formidable Weight for the very Strength of an Angel. But to follow thee, *Jesus*, no one is ready: And few can be dragg'd, much less led after your Precepts. Thus far *St. Bernard*. From what has been said you may gather, gentle Reader, how much it behoves you to fly worldly and false Honour, and how certain it is that true Honour is to be attain'd only by Humility.

But what if some should flatter their Love and Ambition for Learning and Honours with the specious but vain Pretext, of rendering themselves more serviceable to their Neighbours in the Affairs of their Salvation? Will not *St. Bernard* answer them: 'Oh! that they, who have thus ambitiously seized those Honours, would but use them with a Fidelity equal to the Confidence with which they thrust themselves into them? But I wish it does not prove impracticable to gather the sweet Fruits of Charity from the bitter Plant of Ambition. Now to have that thorough Contempt for Honours which they really deserve, requires a more than ordinary Share of the sublimest Virtue. For as *St. John Chrysostom* observes, to be in the Midst of Honours, and make a right Use of them, is like a Man's conversing with a very beautiful young Creature, and making a Law to himself never to cast a loose Look on her. A Man therefore undoubtedly stands in need of the greatest Fortitude of Mind, to make a proper and none but a proper Use of the Power and Honours conferr'd upon him.

C H A P. XXXVI.

How our Lord pray'd in the Mount, and descending walked on the Waters : With some Reflections on Prayer.

AFTER the Disciples had gone on Board and set Sail, our Lord went up a high Mountain, and remain'd there till the third Watch of the Night, in fervent Prayer to his eternal Father. Whence you see that our Lord frequently spent his Time in Prayer, and often the whole or best Part of the Night. Behold him then in this devout Exercise, how he humbles himself before his divine Father, and like a good Shepherd solicites for us his Flock, and this in a State of Mortification, of Watching, and Retirement. And why chiefly does he do this, but to set us the Example of Prayer, as he elsewhere recommended it to his Disciples both by Word and Example. *1 John ii.* He told them, *it is necessary to pray and never cease*, proposing to them the Examples of the Judge and the Widow, as related, *Luke xviii.* to exhort them to Confidence in praying, and to Perseverance in importuning : To which he added another Example of the Friend who lent the Loaves to his Friend merely to avoid being any longer solicited. And all this was purposely meant to inculcate to us the Virtue of Prayer. And indeed it is a Virtue of the greatest Efficacy towards obtaining all that is useful, and removing all that is hurtful to us.

Would

Would you obtain Patience to bear up against Adversities? Be assiduous in praying. Would you obtain Strength to overcome Trials and Temptations? Be assiduous in praying. Would you root out of your Heart all worldly Affections? Be assiduous in praying. Would you become acquainted with, in order to avoid, the subtle Deceits of Satan; would you chearfully persist in the Service of God, and tread the Paths of Mortification and Affliction for his Sake; would you renounce all carnal Desires, and wholly betake yourself to a spiritual Life? Be assiduous in praying. If you wish to destroy evil Thoughts; be a Man of Prayer. If you are desirous to enrich your Mind with holy Reflexions, and your Heart with virtuous, fervent, and pious Desires, be a Man of Prayer. If you are willing to corroborate your good Purposes with manly Resolution and steady Perseverance; be a Man of Prayer. In a Word, whether you mean to expiate Vice from, or implant Virtue in your Breast, make Prayer your constant Application. For it is by Prayer, you receive the Unction of the Holy Ghost, who instructs the Mind in all Things. Prayer lifts a Man to Contemplation, and brings the Soul to the Embraces of her heavenly Spouse. Such are the Power and Efficacy of Prayer. In Confirmation of all this, without recurring to any of the numerous Testimonies in Holy Writ, it is sufficient to recollect the many ignorant and illiterate Person, who by prayer have obtain'd, and still daily obtain these Fruits. Wherefore it highly concerns all, to give themselves up to the Exercise of Prayer, if they mean to be Christians; but this is more
N especially

The manifold Fruits of Prayer.

especially incumbent on Persons in a religious State, who are supposed to be more at Leisure. To this, gentle Reader, I very much exhort you; make it the principal Business of Life, after the necessary Occupations of your State are comply'd with, to attend to Prayer. Let Prayer be your Delight; and take Pleasure in nothing so much as in conversing with God, which is done by Prayer. But that you may have the Advice of a more able Counsellor than I am, to determine you, hear what St. Bernard says to the Purpose. They, says he, who make Prayer their frequent Study, are sensible of what I say. Oftentimes, we approach the holy Altar with coldness of Devotion, and kneel down to Prayer with a Frowardness of Heart; but persisting in it, suddenly we feel ourselves replenish'd with Grace, the Breast is nourish'd with the heavenly Aliment, and the whole Interior widens to the Inundation of Piety. And again in another Place he says, As often as I talk of Prayer methinks something inwardly says to me, whence is it that of all who persist in Prayer, there are so few who are sensible of the Fruits of Prayer? We seem to return from Prayer just as we went to it, no one gives us any Answer, or makes us any Grant. But follow not your own Experience: Rather let Faith direct you. For Faith is ever true, but Experience often otherwise. Now does not the Truth of Faith tell us by the Mouth of Christ *Whatever ye ask praying, believe that ye shall receive, and it shall be done unto you.* Mar. ii. Let none of you then, Brethren, despise or think lightly of his own Prayer, for he to whom we pray, does not. Scarce has our Prayer gain'd

Utter

Utterance, when it is recorded by him, and one of the two we may infallibly depend on that he either will grant what we ask, or what is more useful. We ourselves are ignorant what it most behoves us to ask; but God compassionates our Ignorance, and still receives our Prayer so as to grant us what is better for us instead of the useless or pernicious Favours we solicit. So that Prayer is never barren, provided it be made with the requisite Condition mention'd by the Psalmist, that is with Delight in God. *Delight in the Lord, and he will grant you the Petitions of your Heart,* says David, *Psal. xxxvi.* Thus St. Bernard, and a little lower he adds, Observe, says he, that such are call'd the Petitions of the Heart which Reason dictates as judicious ones. Neither have you cause to complain, but rather to return God Thanks with Sentiments of utmost Gratitude, since such is the great Care he takes of you, that when you ask what is useless, or perhaps detrimental to you, he grants you some Thing better in the Stead of it. Like a tender Parent who gives a Child bread when he asks it, but gives him not a Knife for asking. You are to take Notice that the Petitions of your Heart are wholly contain'd under these three Heads, nor can I see ought which a good Man can covet that is not included in them, namely the Goods in this life which are those of the Body and those of the Soul, and are two of the three Heads, the third is the Beatitude of Eternity. Wonder not that I include the Goods of the Body among the Blessings which we are to ask of God. For temporal Gifts are no less his than those of the Spirit, and therefore are to be ask'd of him as

far as is necessary or conducive to the Spiritual ; for Example, we may, nay, ought to ask and hope for the necessary Support to enable us to serve God. But our greatest Sollicitude, our most fervent and pious Importunity, ought to be for obtaining Virtue and the Grace of God for our Souls in this Life and Glory in the next, where both Body and Soul will be crown'd with compleat Felicity. *And a little farther he says :* Let Prayer then for Temporals be confined to absolute Necessaries : Let Prayer for the spiritual Profit of the Soul be free from all Impurity, and directed wholly to the divine Pleasure. But let Prayer for eternal Happiness, with all due Regard to Humility be bold and daring, with Presumption on God's Mercy alone. He that would pray apart, and with Fruit, says the same Saint, must chuse not only his Place but his Time. The Time of fasting is certainly the fittest, especially when the Night hushes Nature in a profound Silence, for then Prayer will be both purer and more free. Rise, according to the Prophet *Jeremiah*. Lam. ii. *Rise in the Night, in the Beginning of your Vigils, and pour out your Soul like Water in the Presence of the Lord your God.* How securely does Prayer ascend by Night, when no Witnesses are by but God and his Angel who presents it at the Altar of Heaven ! How grateful and pleasing does modest Secrecy make it appear in the Eyes of the Almighty ? How serene and undisturb'd does it reach his Ears, when removed from Noise and Hurry ? And finally, How pure and sincere must it be when un sullied with worldly Sollicitudes, and unttempted with public Applause and Flattery ? It was for this Reason

that the Spouse in the *Canticles* retreated to the Privacy of her Bed-chamber, and to the Stillness of the Night, to seek her Spouse the divine Word, that is, to pray. For in reality they are one and the same Thing. Since otherwise you cannot be properly said to pray, if in your Prayers you seek aught beside the divine Word, or on his Account, for he contains all you can seek. In him are the Remedies for all Diseases, Supplies for all Necessities, Helps for all Defects, and Variety of Perfections. In him, in short, you may find whatever is necessary, fit, or useful. It is needless and useless therefore to ask any Thing beside the divine Word, who himself contains all Things. For even if we should, when Necessity requires, ask of God any temporal Favours, provided we ask them as we ought for the Sake of the divine Word, we cannot so much be said to ask the Temporals as the Word for whose Sake we ask'd them. Thus far St. Bernard.

You have heard then, gentle Reader, the beautiful Words of St. Bernard, that sublime Contemplative, that refined Taster of Prayer and spiritual Sweetness. Reflect then on what he says, that you may be able to relish it. For to this End it is that I the more frequently and willingly intersperse his Words, which are not only full of Spirit and penetrating to the Heart, but Eloquent and pathetically moving to the Service of God. He was truly eloquent, full of Wisdom, and eminent in Sanctity, endeavour therefore, I intreat you, to imitate him, put his wholesome Counsels in practise, that my
quoting

quoting him may gain its Purpose. But let us return to our Lord *Jesus*.

While our Lord then was praying on the Mount, the Disciples at Sea were in great Affliction and Dismay, the Wind being contrary to them, and the Vessel harrafs'd with tempestuous Weather. Behold then and compassionate them amidst this severe Tribulation. They are attack'd by a Storm, in a dark Night, and without their Lord. A severe Tribulation indeed. At the fourth Hour of the Night, our Lord descended from the Mount, and walking on the Waves, came up to them. Contemplate here our Lord, who fatigued with long Watching, and prolix Praying descends barefooted from this steep and perhaps craggy Mountain, and walks upon the Waters as on dry Land. Thus the Creature knew and confess'd its Creator. When he drew near to the Ship. his Disciples seeing him and thinking him a Shadow or Spectre, scream'd out: But our gracious Lord unwilling to terrify or afflict them any longer, pacified them saying, *I am here, be not afraid*, Mat. xiv. Then *Peter* confident of the Lord's Power, began with his Leave to walk likewise on the Waters; but desponding, was about to sink, when our Lord stretch'd forth his right Hand, and rais'd him from sinking. The Gloss upon this Place tells us, that our Lord made him walk on the Waters, to give him a Proof of his divine Power; suffer'd him to plunge in them, to remind him of his Weakness and not proudly to presume on an Equality with God. Our Lord afterwards enter'd into the Vessel, the Storm ceas'd, and Serenity ensued. The Disciples received him with Reverence, rejoiced, and felt

felt a more refined Tranquility than before. Contemplate him and his Disciples in every one of these Passages, which are rich in Matter of Devotion. You may likewise draw from them the moral Reflection that our Lord frequently does the same with us in a spiritual Sense, suffering his Beloved to be inwardly or outwardly afflicted in this World, *because he scourges every Child whom he accepts*, Heb. xii. For they, as the Apostle adds, who are out of Discipline, are not legitimate Children but Bastards. It is necessary therefore for us to undergo Trials and Afflictions in this Life, from thence we gain Knowledge, acquire Virtues, and learn to keep them when acquir'd, and what is more, on them we build all our Hopes of future and eternal Rewards. For which Reason we ought not to repine and be impatient under them, but to love and like them. But because the Advantage of Tribulations is great, and yet unknown to many, we therefore look upon them as difficult, nay insupportable; therefore, Gentle Reader, that you may be instructed to bear them as you ought, I will, according to my Custom, bring you the Authority of St. Bernard: Tribulation is useful, says he, it works a Trial, and leads to Glory. *I am with him*, says the Lord, *in Tribulation*. Let us give Thanks then to the Father of Mercies, who is with us in Tribulations, and consoles us in every Affliction. For, as I said, Tribulation is a necessary Good which is changed into Glory and terminates in Joy. A long, an ample, a plenary Joy, which no one shall snatch from us. Tribulation is necessary, and this Necessity brings forth our Crown. Let us not despise this Seed, Brethren, 'tis a small one indeed, but

great in the Fruits it is big with. Grant it to be tasteless, grant it to be bitter, even grant it to be a Grain of Mustard. Let us not look upon the Outside, but on what is contains. What you behold of it is temporal, the rest you cannot see is eternal.

And lower down he says: I am with him in Tribulation, says the Lord, and I shall require no other Merit than Tribulation. How good then is it for us to adhere to God. I will do so then, and ever place all my Confidence in him, for that he says, *I am with him in Tribulation, I will free him and glorify him.* Psal. xc. My Delight, says he, is to be with the Children of Men. He came upon Earth to be with those who are sad at Heart, and to be with us in our Tribulations, but there shall come a time when we ourselves shall be lifted to meet *Christ* in the Air, and thence to remain for ever with our divine Lord, provided we, in the mean time, endeavour to have him with us here. Oh Lord it is good for me to be troubled, so thou be but with me. Nay better is it infinitely than banqueting or triumphing without thee. The Furnace tries the Potter's Vessels; and Tribulation the Just. What are we afraid of? Why do we despond? Wherefore do we fly the Furnace? Does the Fire rage? No Matter, the Lord is with us in Tribulation. If God is with us, who dare be against us; what does it import who it is? If he has but hold, who shall make him quit his Hold? Lastly, if he glorifies, who has Power to humble? Let us not then, says the same St. Bernard, Glory in Hope alone, but even in Tribulation. *I will gladly Glory in my Weak-*

ness

ness that the Strength of Christ may dwell within me, says St. Paul, 2 Cor. xii. Oh desirable Weakness which is rewarded with the Strength of Christ! Ah who will give me not only to be weak, but even to faint, and be lost to myself, so I be but strong in Force of the Lord of Forces. For Strength is perfected by Weakness, and Virtue gathers Force from Infirmary, as the same Apostle says; and again, when I am weaken'd then I grow strong. It is for this Reason, adds St. Bernard elsewhere, that the Spouse in the Canticles calls her Beloved not a Bundle but a little Bundle, for that Love makes every Burden light, and every Grievance portable. Well might she call him little, for a Little one was born to us: But more especially for that the Sufferings of this World are not to be compared to the future Glory which will be reveal'd in us, if we credit St. Paul, Rom. viii. For our present momentary light Tribulation, will on high work in us an eternal Weight of Glory beyond Measure, as the same Apostle says, 2 Cor. iii. And that will one Day be a Heap of Glory to us, which is now but a little Bundle of Bitterness. And may it not truly be call'd a little Bundle, since Christ himself tells us, that his Yoke is sweet and his Burden light? Not that it is light in itself, for the Bitterness of Death is a severe and dreadful Trial, if it be consider'd only on its own Account, yet Love makes it seem light and easy. The same Saint elsewhere says, If we cast an Eye over the whole Church, we may easily observe, that the spiritual Members of it are much more combated than the Carnal are. This is the Craft of Pride, Envy, and Malice, always to disturb the

the most Perfect, according to the Words of the Prophet, *his Food is of the chosen Sort.* Abac. i. Nay 'tis the Dispensation of divine Providence, that it should be so, not suffering the Weak to be tried beyond their Strength, but drawing even Advantage from Temptation, while the more Perfect, but encrease the Number and Glory of their Triumphs over the Enemy in every fresh Trial they undergo. With much more Eagerness and Warmth the Adversary struggles to defeat the Church's right Wing rather than her left, not labouring so much to defeat the main Body of her Forces immediately, as indirectly to weaken it by wasting the very Soul of it. Now (adds the Saint a little lower) there all our Resistance is requir'd, where Necessity urges most, where the Weight of War hangs heaviest, and where the Battle is the warmest, and the whole Combat most pressing. Again he adds: This the great Grace of God to his Church, this his Mercy towards his Servants, this his Regard for his Elect, that covering her left Wing to spare and wink at it's Weakness, he heads and supports her Right: Hence the Prophet, in the Person of the Church, says: *I took care to have the Lord always before me, for he is at my right Hand that I may not be moved.* Psal. xv. And again, Oh good Jesus! Be thou always on my right, take hold of my right Hand, for I know that no Adversity can harm me, if no Iniquity sways me. Let my left be harrass'd and mutilated, let it be assail'd with Injuries, aggravated with Insults, I willingly sacrifice it, so I be under your Custody and Protection, so that you stand at my right Hand. And else-
where

where, It is one thing, says he, to be actuated by Virtue, another to be ruled by Wisdom: 'tis one thing to be absolute in Virtue, another to be delighted in Sweetness. For tho' Wisdom be powerful, and Virtue sweet, yet to give Words their true Meaning, Vigour belongs properly to Virtue, and Serenity of Soul with a Kind of spiritual Sweetness, is the certain Mark of Wisdom. And this I believe the Apostle meant, when, after many fine Counsels relating to Virtue, he adds, that Wisdom consists in Sweetness in the Holy Spirit. To resist then, to repel Force with Force, (which are Properties strictly belonging to Virtue) are undoubtedly attended with real Honour, but that Honour is a very laborious One. For there is a wide Difference between the painful Defence of their Honour, and quiet Possession of it. In short to be actuated by Virtue, and to be in full Enjoyment of Virtue are two Things. Whatever Virtue produces, Wisdom enjoys: And what Wisdom disposes and resolves, Virtue moderates and puts in Practice. *Write Wisdom in your Leisure*, says the wise Man, *Eccles. xxxviii.* The Leisure then of Wisdom is Business, and the more Wisdom is at Leisure the more active it is in it's proper Sphere. On the other side, Virtue shines the brighter for Exercise, and to be properly active is the Proof of Virtue. So that if any one should define Wisdom to be the Love of Virtue, I cannot see, how he would be wrong. For where there is Love, Labour becomes Sweetness. And therefore perhaps Wisdom (which in *Latin* is *Sapientia*) takes its Etymology from *Sapor*, Relish, as a Kind of Quality or Ingredient added to Virtue, which gives

The LIFE of

gives a Relish to that which would otherwise be merely tasteless and insipid. Nor should I think it amiss to define Wisdom, the Relish of Good. It belongs then to Virtue (adds the Saint a little lower) to bear Troubles with Fortitude, but to Wisdom the rejoicing in Tribulations. *To comfort your Heart, and sustain the Lord*, is the part of Virtue; but to taste and see that the Lord is sweet, is that of Wisdom. And that the Properties of both may the better appear from Nature itself, let it suffice to observe that Modesty of Mind is a certain Proof of Wisdom, as Constancy is of Virtue. And right it is that Wisdom should follow Virtue, since Virtue is a Kind of solid Foundation on which Wisdom raises the Superstructure. *Again in another Place he says*, Happy the Man, who directs the Sufferings and Passions, with a View of Justice, so as to bear all he suffers for the Son of God, without Murmuration at Heart, but with Praise and Thanksgiving. He who carries himself thus, properly takes up his Bed and walks. Our Bed is our Body, in which before we were languishing, subservient to our unruly Desires and lawless Appetites. We then take up this Bed when we compel it to obey the Spirit. The Spirit (says the same Saint) is truly manifold, which inspires so many different Ways the Children of Men, in such a Manner that no one can abscond or skreen himself from its Heat. Insomuch that it is given them for their Use, for Miracles, for Salvation, for Help, for Comfort, and for Fervor in Devotion. For the *Uses of Life* it is given to the Good and the Bad, and yields alike to the Worthy and the Unworthy abundans of Advantages

vantages, without any Limits prefix'd to it; and therefore he would be highly ungrateful who should deny or not acknowledge these Benefits of the Spirit. It is given for *Miracles*, in the many Signs, Prodigies and wondrous Virtues it operates by the Hands of some. It was the Spirit operated so many marvellous Works in Antiquity, and which confirms our Faith, in old Miracles, by the daily new Ones it manifests to us. But as the Gift of Miracles is not always useful to the Operator of them, therefore the Spirit is likewise given to *Salvation*, as when, with all our Heart, we turn to the Lord our God. It is given for *Help*, when in the Midst of our Struggles with Trials of Trouble, it assists our Weakness. And when the Spirit gives Testimony to our Spirit that we are the Children of God, that Inspiration is given us for our *Comfort*. Finally the Spirit is given for *Fervour*, when breathing strongly into the Hearts of the Perfect, it kindles a powerful Flame of divine Charity, by means of which, in the Hope of the Children of God, we glory in Tribulations, deem Scandal an Honour to us, rejoice in the Injuries done us, and are transported with Pleasure when loaded with Contempt. To all of us then the Spirit is given for Salvation, but not alike for Fervour. There are but Few replenish'd with this Spirit, but very Few, who covet and pursue it. We are content with our own Narrowness, and neither labour to breathe Liberty, nor even so much as aspire to it. Thus far St. Bernard.

You have seen then, gentle Reader, the many and beautiful Reasons which the Saint gives, to shew how necessary Afflictions are for us.

us. Wonder not then that our Saviour should suffer his Disciples, whom he loved so tenderly, to be be harra's'd with Tempests, Tears, and Afflictions, since you see the great Usefulness of them. We frequently read of their being agitated with Storms and contrary Winds, but never read of their being once Shipwreckt. Which ought to serve you as a Lesson, to stand Firm, Patient and Chearful amidst the Contradictions and Trials you may meet with; and so to exercise yourself in the Practice of the Spirit, as, fill'd with it's Fervour, to covet Sufferings for the Sake of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who chose this Way for Himself and his Followers, and was the first to tread it before us.



C H A P. XXXVII.

Of the Woman of Chanaan, and how our Angel Guardians faithfully assist us.

AS our Lord *Jesus* was going about exercising the laborious Function of Preaching, and curing the Infirm, there came to him a Woman of *Chanaan* (that is, of the Land of *Chanaan*, and of the Race of the *Gentiles*) beseeching him to heal her Daughter who was possess'd with the Devil. For her Faith was so great that she firmly believed, without Hesitation, that he could do it. And though our Lord as yet made her no Answer, she still per-

persisted, and persevered to cry out, and to beg of him to have Mercy on her: Infomuch that his Disciples also compassionating her Cries earnestly intreated him on her Behalf. And when our Lord at length made Answer: That *it was not good to take the Bread of the Children, and to cast it to the Dogs*; she, with profound Humility, replied: That *the Dogs also eat of the Crums that fall from the Table of their Masters*. wherefore she was thought worthy to be heard, and was granted what she petition'd for. Consider here our Lord *Jesus* and his Disciples, and have Recourse to the general Heads of Meditation as I have before prescribed to you. Reflect however, at the same Time, on the Virtues of this Woman, and endeavour to profit by them, which were chiefly Three. The *First* was her great Faith which even extended itself to her Daughter, and for which she was prais'd by our Lord. The *Second* was her perseverant Prayer, since she was not only perseverant but importunate. Which Importunity is also acceptable to God, as I have before shew'd you on other Occasions. The *Third* was her profound Humility, for she neither denied herself to be included in the Comparison which our Lord made, nor thought herself worthy to be reckon'd among his Children, or to have the Bread itself, but was contented to receive the Crumbs only. Wherefore she greatly humbled herself, and therefore obtain'd what she sought for. The same will happen to you if, with a sincere, pure, and faithful Mind, persevering in Prayer, you humble yourself before God, esteeming yourself unworthy to receive any good from him, you may then undoubtedly expect

expect to obtain what you ask for. And as the Apostles interceded for the *Chanaanite* : so will your Angel Guardian interceed for you, and offer up your Prayers to the Almighty. Upon which Head, hear St. Bernard Saying : Often when my Soul has been sighing, praying, and tormenting itself with Anxiety for its Heavenly Spouse, and that the dearly Desired, and so much Sought after, has in his own Mercy condescended to meet her, I thought she might from her own Experience repeat that of *Jeremiah* : *Thou art good, O Lord, to such as hope in thee, to the Soul which seeks thee.* Nay, the very Angel who accompanies our Heavenly Spouse, is the previous Minister or rather Plenipotentiary of the secret Salutation, this Angel, I say, with what Joy, with what Delight, with what Transport, turning to our Lord, does he say ; I render Thanks to thee, O Lord of Majesty ; *Because thou hast given him his Heart's Desire. and hast not withholden the request of his Lips,* Psal. xx. He it is who sedulously, and in every Place, as a constant Pursuer of the Soul, never ceases to admonish it by continual Suggestions, saying : *Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the Desires of thy Heart.* And again : *Wait on the Lord and keep his Ways. Though he tarry wait for him, because he will surely come, he will not tarry,* Haba. ii. And to the Lord he says : *As the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks, so This panteth after thee, O God,* Psal. xli. *He hath desired thee in the Night, and thy Spirit in the inmost Recess of his Heart. From the Morning he hath watch'd unto thee.* And again : *The whole Day he hath stretch'd*
out

out his Hands unto thee. Dismiss her, for She crieth after thee. Return, O Lord, and vouchsafe to give Ear. Look down from Heaven and behold, and visit the Forsaken. The faithful Paranympth who is conscious without Envy, of the natural Love between the Soul and her Spouse, seeks not any Thing for himself, but only the Glory of his Lord. He passeth mutual between the heavenly Spouse and his Beloved, offering her Vows, and bringing his Gifts, exciting her to Love, and moving him to Mercy. Sometimes likewise, though but seldom, he renders them present to himself either attracting her, or inviting him, for he is familiarly known in the sacred Mansion of Heaven, nor fears a Repulse seeing daily the Face of the heavenly Father. Thus far St. Bernard.



C H A P. XXXVIII.

How the Pharisees and others were scandaliz'd at the Words of our Lord Jesus.

WE ought never to wonder that some take Occasion of Scandal at our Words and Actions, tho' never so good and perfect; seeing that this often befel our Lord himself, who could not err either in Word or Deed. For it happen'd at a certain Time that the Pharisees

O ask'd

ask'd our Lord, why his Disciples did not wash their Hands before they eat? Our Lord answer'd them sharply, and reprov'd them for having more Regard to the outward Cleanliness of the Body, than the inward Purity of the Soul. At which Answer they were scandaliz'd, but our Lord regarded them not.

At another Time, as he was preaching and teaching in the Synagogue, some of his Disciples being too worldly, and not understanding him, went their Way. But to his twelve Disciples he said, *Will ye also go away?* And Peter, in the Name of the rest, answer'd him: *To whom shall we go? thou hast the Words of eternal Life.* Consider him in these and the like Things, how he speaks with Authority and teaches true Doctrine, having no Regard to the Scandal of the Weak and Simple: Wherefore we must observe *First*, That we are not to depart from the Virtue of Justice on Account of another Person being scandaliz'd. *Secondly*, That we ought to be more careful for the inward Purity of our Hearts, than solicitous for the outward Cleanliness of the Body, which Thing our Lord in another Place more expressly recommends, saying in St. Luke: *That we must live according to the Spirit*; so that the Words of our Redeemer should not seem strange to us, as they did to those Disciples, who, when Christ said in St. John: *Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, &c.* could not bear to hear them, and therefore being scandaliz'd departed from him: But we should rather acknowledge them to be the Words of eternal Life; that, together with the Twelve that remained with him, we may endeavour perfectly to imitate him.

C H A P. XXXIX.

Of the Reward which our Lord Jesus has promised to those who forsake All for him.

AS St. Peter, the prudent and faithful Disciple of Jesus Christ, on a certain Occasion ask'd him, in the Name of the rest of his Brethren the Apostles, concerning what Reward they should have who had quitted the World, and all Things in it, for the Love of him: Our Lord amongst other Things answer'd Him: That they who should forsake all worldly Things to follow him, should receive a Reward of a hundred-fold in this World, and Life everlasting in the next. Consider well the Greatness of this Reward, exult with utmost Joy, and render Praise and Thanksgiving to the Lord, who has placed thee in a State of negotiating so advantageously for thyself as to be able to gain a hundred for one, and withal eternal Life. This Hundred-fold however is not to be understood of temporal Things, but of spiritual Ones only; that is, of inward Consolation and heavenly Virtues, which we shall prove by Experience, and not acquire by Knowledge. For when the Soul begins to have a true Relish for the Virtues of Poverty, Charity, Patience, and other Christian Perfections, and takes Pleasure and Delight in the constant Practice of them, may it not truly be said of her, that she has received a Hundred-fold? And if at length she still rises to more sublime Degrees

of Perfection so as frequently to partake of the inward Visits of her divine and heavenly Spouse, may it not again be affirm'd with Truth, that she has receiv'd a thousand-fold for all whatever it be that she has left here for his Sake? You see then the Veracity of the Words which were uttered by eternal Truth, who never fails even in this World, to reward the Soul that is truly devoted to him, with a Hundred-fold, and this not once but frequently, affecting it often with so deep a Sense of his divine Love as to make it esteem as Dung every Thing it has forsaken, and the whole World itself, for the Sake of obtaining the Possession of its divine and heavenly Spouse. But that you may be more amply instructed in relation to this hundred-fold Gift of the Gospel, and may reap more Benefit from it, hear what *St. Bernard* says on that Head. If any one (says he) should say, shew me the Hundred-fold that is promised, and I'll freely quit all Things of this Life to obtain it. But why should I shew it? Since Faith which has human Reason for its Voucher can have no Merit. Will you sooner give Credit to the Evidence of Man than believe the Promises of Truth? You err by diving too deeply into the hidden Mysteries of God. Unless you believe you cannot understand. It is a hidden Manna, and in the Apocalypse of *St. John* a new Name is promised to those that shall overcome, a Name which no one knows but he that receives it. And again he says: Does he not possess all Things to whom all Things are turn'd to good? Has he not received a Hundred-fold who is fill'd with the Holy Ghost, and possesses *Christ* in his Breast? Or rather, shall we not

say,

say, that the Visitation of the Holy Ghost, and the Presence of *Jesus Christ*, far exceed the Hundred-fold Gift of any other Thing? *Ob! how great is the Multitude of thy Sweetness which thou hast laid up for those that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee?* saith the Royal Psalmist, *Psal. xxx.* Observe here how the Soul breaks forth into the Remembrance of the abundance of spiritual Sweetness, and how, in endeavouring to express herself, she multiplies her Words. *How great* (saith she) *is the Multitude*, &c. This Hundred-fold therefore is the Adoption of Children, the Freedom and First-fruits of the Spirit, the Delight of Charity, the Glory of a good Conscience, and the Kingdom of God which is within us. It consists not in Meat or Drink, but in the Justice, Peace, and Joy of the Holy Ghost. A Joy indeed, not in the Hopes of a future Glory, but rather in the present suffering of Tribulations. This is that Fire which *Christ* would have vehemently to be enkindled. This is the Virtue which made St. *Andrew* so cheerfully embrace the Cross he was to die on, St. *Lawrence* despise the Butcheries of his cruel Tyrants, and which made St. *Stephen* at his Death pray for those who stoned him. This is that Peace which *Christ* left to those that should follow him, for it is a *Gift, and Peace to the Elect of God.* 'Tis the Peace of the Father, and a Gift of future Glory. It exceeds all Sense, and is not to be compar'd with any Thing under the Heavens, or whatever is desirable in this World. This is the plentiful Grace of Devotion, and the holy Unction teaching us all those Things, which they prove
 O 3 who

who have experienced, and they who have not experienced are ignorant of. Thus far *St. Bernard*. Rejoice then, and be glad, and as I said before, render Thanks to God that he has called you to receive this Hundred-fold, and invited you to enter often into this Paradise of Joy, which by the Study and Exercise of Prayer you may hope to obtain.

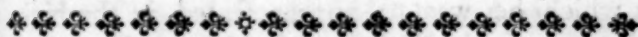


C H A P. XL.

How our Lord Jesus ask'd his Disciples what the Jews said of him.

AS our blessed Lord was coming into the Quarters of *Cæsarea Philippi*, he ask'd his Disciples what the *Jews* said of him, and likewise, whom they thought him to be, and other Things. Some of them answer'd, and said: *Some take you for John the Baptist, others for Elias, and others for Jeremiab, or one of the Prophets.* But *Peter*, for himself and the rest, answer'd: *Thou art Christ the Son of the Living God.* And our Lord said to him: *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.* And at the same Time gave him the Keys of Heaven, the Power to loose or bind upon Earth. Behold here then, Pious Reader, both our Lord and his Disciples, and contemplate them according to the general Rules before given

ven you. And observe moreover, that *Peter* whom *Christ* had so exalted above the rest, was a little after call'd *Satan* by the same *Christ*, because through the too great Attachment which *Peter* had to the visible Presence of *Christ's* Humanity he endeavour'd to perswade him from suffering, and from going through his Passion. Do you likewise follow the Example of *Christ*, and esteem them to be your Enemies, who endeavour to draw you from the Practice of spiritual Exercises for the Sake of any temporal View or corporal Alleviation.



C H A P. XLI.

Of the glorious Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus on Mount Thabor.

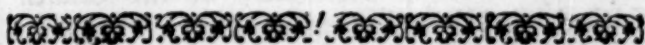
OUR Lord *Jesus* desirous to strengthen his Apostles in the steadfast Belief both of his Divinity and Humanity, first shew'd them that he was perfect Man, by living among them as Man : And that he was also perfect God, by the wonderful Miracles he wrought, which far surpass'd the Power and Nature of a pure Man. He had likewise farther told them, that, as Man, he should suffer a most painful and approbrious Death, and afterwards rise again gloriously to Life as he was God. After all this he concluded and said : That there were some of them which were then present, who should

not see Death till they had first seen the Son of Man (which was himself) coming in his Kingdom; that is to say, beheld him in his glorious Transfiguration, and saw his sacred Humanity resplendently shining with a wonderful Brightness, as they should afterwards behold him in his heavenly Glory.

To this Purpose therefore about eight Days after he took with him three of his Disciples, *Peter, James and John*, and went up to the Top of a high Mountain call'd *Thabor*, and was there Transfigured before them, that is, he was so alter'd and changed from his common Likeness, that he put on that beautiful and glorious Form in which he was to appear seated in the high Throne of his Majesty, so that his Face and Countenance became bright as the Sun, and his Garments were as white as Snow.

And presently there appear'd *Moses* and *Elias* speaking with him concerning his sacred Passion, which he was to undergo in *Jerusalem*, and said: Lord, it is not expedient for thee to die, because one Drop only of thy precious Blood is sufficient to redeem the World, but our Lord *Jesus* answer'd: *The good Paster giveth his Life for his Sheep*: So therefore it behoves me to do. The Apostles remain'd extatic amidst this glorious Vision: And *St. Peter*, above the rest, being forgetful of all earthly Things, was desirous of remaining there in Possession of that Glance of Bliss, and therefore said: *Lord, it is good for us to be here: If thou wilt, let us make here three Tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias*, John xvii. But as the holy Evangelist takes Notice, *He knew not what he said*; in desiring to continue with our Lord *Jesus*

Jesus in that Place of Bliss, before he had suffer'd that painful Death which he had before told them he was first to do. The Holy Ghost likewise appearing in the Brightness of a Cloud, overshadow'd them, and out of the Cloud there came a Voice from Heaven, saying: *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.* The Apostles trembling with Fear at this Voice, fell flat with their Face to the Ground, but our Lord *Jesus* rais'd them, and bid them not to fear: And lifting up their Eyes, and looking round them, they saw none but him alone. Contemplate well these Passages, and endeavour to render yourself present by devout Meditation, to the Things already said, because they contain most great and sublime Mysteries.



C H A P. XLII.

How our Lord Jesus cast the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple.

OUR Lord *Jesus*, at two several Times, cast the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, which Action, amongst all the Miracles he wrought, seems most strange and wonderful. For when he wrought other Miracles among them, in which he evidently declared the Power of his Godhead; yet those perverse People the Scribes and Pharisees blasphemed and contemned him for them: But at this time
though

though there were great Multitudes assembled together in the Temple; yet they had no Power at all to resist or withstand him, but with a Scourge made of Cords he drove them all out before him. The Reason of this was: That his inward Zeal and Fervour being vehemently enkindled in seeing his heavenly Father so much dishonour'd especially in that Place where he ought to have been the most honour'd and worshipp'd, made him appear to them with a terrible and dreadful Countenance, so that they were affrighted and had no Power to resist him. Consider him here attentively and compassionate him, for he is full of compassionate Grief. But at the same Time fear. For it is a dreadful Example that ought to be consider'd by all Men, but more especially by such who have any Office or Authority in the Church of God, and by all religious Persons who are placed in the House of God, to serve him in devout Prayer and other holy and spiritual Exercises. For if such idly busy themselves, and meddle with worldly Affairs, they may justly fear the Wrath and Indignation of God against them, and apprehend the Danger of be cast out of his Grace in this Life, and out of his eternal Glory in the Life to come

C H A P. XLIII.

Of the Sick Man that was heal'd at the Water in Jerusalem, call'd Probatica Piscina.

THERE was in the the City of *Jerusalem* a standing Water, in the nature of a Pond in which the Sheep were washed that were to be offer'd in Sacrifice. Where also, according to the Opinion of the Fathers, afterwards lay hid the Wood of the holy Cross. This Water once in every Year, by particular Appointment of God was stir'd by an Angel, and the sick Person that descended first into it after the Angel had stir'd it was immediately heal'd of his Infirmary : Wherefore great Multitudes of sick and languishing People remain'd continually near the Water expecting it to be moved by the Angel. Among these there was one Man lying on his Bed, who had been sick of the Palsy thirty-eight Years, whom our Lord *Jesus* heal'd on the Sabbath-day. Here according to your usual Method behold our Lord how humbly he approaches the sick Man and speaks to him. For in this Action there are three Things worthy our devotest Attention. The *First* is, that our Lord *Jesus* ask'd the sick Person whether he would be heal'd or not : By which we are given to understand, that our Lord, without our Consent, will not bestow Salvation upon us. Wherefore all stubborn and sinful Persons who neither desire nor yet will give Consent to such internal Motions

Motions as God inspireth them with, for their Salvation are undoubtedly without Excuse. For as St. *Augustin* saith: He that made thee without thee cannot save thee without thee.

The *Second* Thing, which is to be observed is, that we ought to be careful after we are freed and cleans'd from Sin, not to fall willfully into it again, lest our Crime for so doing be afterwards by our Lord punish'd with more Severity. Wherefore he said to the sick Man whom he had restored; *Go thy Way and sin no more, lest worse happen unto thee.*

The *Third* Thing which we ought to consider is, That wicked Men usually misconstrue the good Works of others, and look upon them with an evil Eye, but good Men act the contrary. For thus the *Jews*, full of Envy, when they saw the sick Man miraculously cured by our Lord *Jesus*, and carrying away his Bed on the Sabbath-Day, they immediately told him, *That it was not lawful to do it on the Sabbath-day*; to whom he answer'd: That he who had made him whole, said to him, *Take up thy Bed and walk.* Before this they ask'd him not who it was that had heal'd him, but began to carp at what displeased them, and as they thought was reprehensible, and took no Notice at all of the good Work which was commendable, and so manifestly wrought before them. This is the Manner of all wicked Men to turn every Thing to the worst, which good Men convert to the best. For they who lead a spiritual Life interpret all Things in the best Manner to the Honour and Glory of God, whether Prosperity or Adversity, knowing that every Thing which comes to pass is through his holy Will or Permission, and therefore judge the best of, and

reap

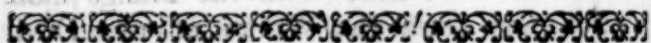
JESUS CHRIST.

221

reap thence great Increase of Merit, as *St. Bernard* teaches, saying: Pry not too far into other Men's Lives, nor temerariouſly judge of their Actions. Think no Evil of thy Neighbour, but if thou ſee any Thing that is bad excuſe at leaſt his Intention if you cannot his Works: Imagine the Cauſe to be Ignorance, Inadvertency, or an Accident. And if his Crimes are beyond all Diſſimulation, ſay at leaſt to yourſelf: 'Twas the Effect of a violent Temptation. Had it been as powerful in me, what Deſtruction would it not have wrought? Thus ſar *St. Bernard*. That the Good reap Benefit from all Things, even from their own and other Men's Sins, from the Things moſt hurtful, and from the Works of the Devil himſelf; *St. Bernard* thus argues: Tho' the irrational and Animal Part, cannot attain to what is Spiritual, yet it muſt be own'd, that by the bodily Service it does, it very much helps thoſe to obtain it, who turn the Uſe of all temporal and worldly Things to the eternal Advantage of their Souls, by making Uſe of the Things of this Life as if they uſed them not. *And again*: Tho' there are ſome Creatures which as to their Uſe are found inconvenient, and even pernicious, yet it is certain that they contribute to the good of temporal and worldly Men. For they have ever ſomething that may turn to the Good of thoſe, who according to their Reſolution are call'd Saints, if not by ſubminiſtering Nouriſhment, or performing their due Office, at leaſt by exerciſing their Mind by the Help of him who is always ready to thoſe who make uſe of their Reaſon, helping them to make a Proſiciency in good Diſcipline,

by

by whom also, *The invisible Things of God are seen, being understood by those Things which are made*, Rom. i. In short, he that has Grace enough to take all Things in good Part, and to suppose that all which God shall send is for the best, shall be enabled to suffer many Trials and Tribulations with little Pain, and by daily Exercise obtain at length so great a Peace and Tranquility of Mind, that seldom or never any Thing shall offend or molest him, but that shall be verified in him, which the wise Man saith: *Whatever shall happen to the just Man it shall not make him sorry*, Prov. xii.



C H A P. XLIV:

How our Lord Jesus was received by the two Sisters Mary and Martha, and of the two sorts of Lives signified by the same, that is Active and Contemplative.

IT happen'd on a certain Time that our Lord Jesus went with his Disciples to the City of *Bethania*, to a House which was named the Castle of *Martha* and *Mary*. And they, whose Love and Affections was wholly placed in him, were exceeding glad at his coming, and received him with all possible Joy and Respect. And *Martha*, the elder Sister, who had the Care and Government of the House, went immediately to provide Meat for him and his Disciples.

But

But *Mary* her Sister forgetting as it were all corporal Food, and desiring to feed her Soul with the fervent Love of her dear Saviour *Jesus*, sat herself down on the Ground byside his Feet. And as our Lord, who was never idle, was talking according to his usual Custom of those Things which regard eternal Life, she with her Heart and Thoughts fix'd on him, attentively listen'd to his blessed Words, and took a Pleasure beyond Expression, in the Exposition of his heavenly Doctrine. *Martha*, who was busy in making ready the Provision for our Lord and his Disciples, seeing her Sister sitting idly as it were at his Feet was grievously troubled at it, and therefore made her Complaint to our Lord as if he had no Regard for her, and begg'd him to bid her Sister to rise and help her.

Mary, at the Voice of her Sister, awaken'd as it were from the Depth of a sweet and quiet Sleep, and fearing lest she should be disturbed from that sweet Contentment and quiet Repose in which her Soul was in, always obedient to the Will of God spoke nothing, but reverently bowing down her Face to the Ground, she humbly waited to hear what our Lord would say to her. But our Lord answering in her Behalf, said unto *Martha* : *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many Things : But one Thing is necessary, Mary hath chosen the best Part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

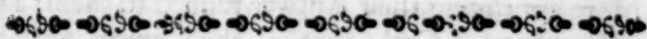
At this Answer of our Lord *Jesus*, *Mary* was greatly comforted, and sat with more Confidence at his sacred Feet, pursuing with Perseverance her former Purpose. But at length, when

when all Things were ready for his Refection, and he had done speaking, she arose, fetch'd Water to wash his Hands, and remaining there present, diligently served him with all Things he wanted. Consider here attentively, Pious Reader, our Lord entering this House, and with what extreme Joy they receive him, together with all that pass'd before-mention'd, because from thence you may gather most beautiful Matter for your devout Meditation.

You must know then, that by these two holy Sisters the *Fathers* understand two different States of Life, that is, the one Active, the other Contemplative. To treat of these would be a Subject of a very long Extent. But tho' I am convinced that 'tis nowise necessary to dwell long upon it, I will nevertheless say something on that Head, *First*, because St. *Bernard* in many Places has largely treated of it: And *Secondly*, because it is a Subject most useful, full of all spiritual Comfort and very necessary for you. For according to this two-fold Manner of living we all proceed, but how we ought to do that is a Matter we All are ignorant of, which is very unfortunate and not a little dangerous, especially to Men of religious Lives.

The Active kind of Life then is emblematically express'd in *Martba*: which active Life itself is divisible into two Parts. The *First* is that by which every One exercises himself chiefly for his own Good, correcting, mending, and improving himself in Virtues; and nextly to the Advantage of his Neighbour, by Works of Justice, Piety, and Charity. The *Second* Part is that by which a Man is led, tho' for greater Merit's Sake, to exercise himself chiefly to his Neigh-

Neighbours Advantage, in governing, teaching, and forwarding the Conversion of Souls; as Prelates, Preachers, and the like do. And between these two Parts of Active Life is the Contemplative, and it is disposed in this Manner, that every one do exercise himself, *First*, in Prayer, sacred Studies and other good Deeds and Offices of Life, with an Intention to correct his own Vices and acquire Virtues: *Secondly*, That he rest in Contemplation, seeking Solitude, and Conversation a part with God: And *Thirdly*, That, by both Exercises inspired and enlighten'd with true Wisdom and Goodness, and thence become zealous, give himself up to the Salvation of Others.



C H A P. XLV.

Our Lord warneth the Jews that the Church should devolve to the Gentiles, in the Parable of the Husbandmen, who kill the Son of their Lord.

OUR Lord, zealous for the Salvation of the Souls for which he was come to pay down the Ransom of Life, tried every Means to draw them to himself, and to deliver them from the Jaws of Sin and Satan. Wherefore sometimes he made use of the gentle insinuating Pathetic; and at others of severe and terrifying Reproofs; sometimes he recurr'd to Similitudes, sometimes

P

to

to Signs and Wonders ; now to Prophecies, and anon to Threats : Thus varying the Means and Manner of Cure according to the Place and Time, and the Diversity of Persons.

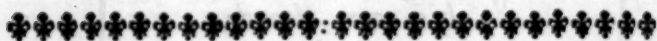
In this Place, he reproves the Princes and Pharisees, with severe Language and a terrible Example, which however was so justly applied that they took it to themselves. He proposed to them the Parable of the Husbandmen, who kill'd their Lord's Messengers sent to them to demand Payment of the Fruits due to him. And asking what was the Punishment due to such unworthy Tenants : Due, say they ? why their Lord must destroy these Wretches, and let his Vineyard to other Husbandmen. *Jesus* therefore approving their Answer replied to them : The Kingdom of God, that is, the Church, shall be taken from among you, and shall be given to another People who will cultivate it, that is to the Gentiles ; of whom we and the whole Church are sprung. To this he added the Example of the Corner-stone, which signified himself, and was to overthrow *Judaism*. Upon which finding themselves to be level'd at, instead of reforming they were but the more exasperated ; for their Malice quite blinded them.

C H A P. XLVI.

*How the Jews sought to ensnare our Saviour
by his own Words.*

AS our Lord *Jesus* neglected no Means that might conduce to the Salvation of the *Jews*, so on the contrary, the *Jews* omitted none to calumniate and destroy him. They thought therefore to deceive him but they deceived themselves, with their own Devices. They sent to him by premeditated Contrivance some of their own Disciples, accompanied by the Servants of *Herod*, to enquire of him, whether or not it was lawful to give Tribute to *Cæsar*? For, by this Means, they imagin'd they might bring him under Suspicion to *Cæsar* and his Friends, or render him at least odious to the *Jews*, as if he could not have answer'd but against himself. But the All-wise Searcher of Hearts seeing into their Malice, answer'd them, that they must give *Cæsar* his own, and to God his Due; and told them withal, that they were Hypocrites who utter'd with fair Words a malicious Purpose. And thus disappointed of their fraudulent Intentions they returned back with Shame. Here consider attentively our Lord *Jesus*, according to the general Method of Contemplation I laid down to you; and reflect likewise that *Christ* will not allow us to defraud temporal Princes and Magistrates of their just Right, whether Good or Bad, Believers or Unbelievers.

Wherefore 'tis a very great Sin, to defraud, or refuse Payment of, the Customs and Taxes which our temporal Superiors think proper to lay on us for the Good of the State.



CHAP. XLVII.

Of the Blind Man restored to Sight at Jericho, and of many other Things.

THE bountiful Lord *Jesus*, who out of his immense Love for us came down from his divine Father's Throne, to work our Salvation, prepared to set out for *Jerusalem*, to meet his approaching Passion, which he had even at this Time foretold to them, but they were too blind in their Obstinacy to understand him. When therefore he drew nigh to *Jericho*, a certain blind Man, who set on the Way begging, having Intelligence from the Populace of his passing by, began to cry out powerfully to him for Pity. And though the Multitude rebuked him, they could neither dismay nor silence him. The Lord *Jesus* therefore out of Regard to his Faith and Fervour, order'd him to be brought to him, and ask'd him, *What wilt thou that I do unto thee?* To whom the blind Man answer'd, *Lord, that I see*; which our compassionate Lord granted, saying, *See*: And thus saying restored him to Sight. Consider here attentively, Devout Reader, the Graciousness of

our

our Lord : And at the same time reflect on the great Efficacy of Prayer attended with Faith and Perseverance. Importunity in Prayer, you see does not displease God : But is rather agreeable to him. You have already an Instance of this in the *Cananean* : And elsewhere another in the Man who obtain'd the Loaves by night, thro' the Importunity of Prayer. And thus does the Lord grant to All, who importune him, their just, and orderly Petitions. For 'tis to every one alike he says : *What wilt thou that I do to thee ?* Nay, he often grants even more than is ask'd, as we shall see in the Person of *Zaccheus*. Ask then like the Blind-man without blushing. For why should you blush to serve God, to throw off Sin, or to ask the Graces necessary for either. To be bashful is sometimes a Virtue, but may oftentimes be a great Fault as St. *Bernard* observes. There is a Shame to Sin, and a Shame to Glory. 'Tis a good Shame to blush at the Thought of sinning or having sin'd. And tho' no human Witness be by, you ought with so much the more Modesty to revere the Presence of a divine One, as you are truly convinced by how much he surpasses Man in Purity, and that he is as heinously offended at Sin as he is distant from it. Such a Kind of Shame may boldly bid Defiance to Reproach, and paves a Way to Glory, by not admitting Sin, or at least by repenting of, and attoning for it, if committed. But should we be ashamed or grieved to make an Acknowledgment of our Faults ; such a Shame is to Sin, and strays wide of Glory. For, the Evil, which Compunction would fain expel from the Heart, this false, this foolish Shame, the Binder of all Lips, suffers not to be banish'd

from it. Oh sovereign Kind of Victory to yield to the divine Majesty : And to find no Reluctance in submitting to the Authority of his Church ! Oh strange Perversity, not to blush at defiling, and yet to blush at cleansing our Feet. Thus far St. *Bernard*.

Whatever may occur to your Imagination concerning this blind Man, is alike applicable to those other two blind Men whom our Lord enlighten'd at his going forth from *Jericho*, as he did this before his Entrance into that City. Of the two see St. *Matthew*, Chap. xx. and St. *Mark*, Chap. x. where the Name of one of them is mention'd : And that upon their crying out, as this poor Man did, they received the same Answer, and Cure from our Lord.



C H A P. XLVIII.

*How our Lord went into the House of
Zacheus.*

WHEN our Lord *Jesus* at his Entry into *Jericho* was passing thro' the Streets, *Zacheus* the chief of the Publicans, who was inform'd of his Approach, and very desirous to see him, but could not for the Throng, being a very little Man, got up at length into a *Sycamore* Tree, that he might at least behold him from thence. *Jesus* therefore knowing and accepting his Faith and Desire, says to him. *Zacheus make haste and come down, for I must this Day*

Day abide in thy House. Who immediately coming down received him with great Joy and Reverence, and prepared him a noble Repaste. Here you see, Christian Reader, the gracious Courtesy of our blessed Saviour, who grants *Zacheus* so much more than he presumed to hope for, or ask. He sought a Sight of him, and *Jesus* gave him himself. Such is the Power of Prayer! And Desire is such. Nay it is a loud Voice, and an effectual Petition. Wherefore says the Psalmist: *The Lord hath granted the Desire of the Poor, and thy Ear hath heard the Preparation of their Heart.* And at the time when *Moses* was Silent with his Lips, and speaking only in his Heart, the Lord said to him, *Why do you cry aloud to me?* *Exod. xiv.* Contemplate here our divine Lord graciously sitting at Table with *Zacheus* amidst a Company of Sinners, and familiarly conversing with them in order to gain them over to himself. Behold likewise the Disciples sitting with the same Sinners, and conversing with, and encouraging them to good Works: Knowing it to be the Will of their divine Master.



C H A P. XLIX.

Of the Man born Blind.

WHEN our Lord went to *Jerusalem* he saw a Man born blind whose Name was *Cælidonius*, and stooping he made a Paste of Earth and his Spittle, with which he anointed his Eyes, and sent him to the Bath *Siloe*, to bathe. The Man went, bathed his Eyes, and received his Sight. This Miracle which was strictly examin'd into by the *Jews*, turn'd to their Confusion. See the Story in the Gospel, where it is very plainly and beautifully related. Behold here our Lord *Jesus*, and contemplate him according to the general Rules already laid down to you: Here too consider the great Gratitude of the cured Man, who courageously and resolutely defends our Lord, before the very Princes and Rulers of the *Jews*, without sparing them in any thing, even before he had the Blessing of seeing our Lord. The Virtue of Gratitude is extremely commendable and pleasing in the Sight of God, as its opposite is a detestable Vice before him. Of which Subject thus says *St. Bernard*: Learn to be thankful for every Grace received. Consider diligently the Favours heap'd upon you, that no Gift of God be defrauded of the due Return of Gratitude and Thanksgiving you ought to make whether the Gift be great, middling or little. Lastly, we are directed to gather the Fragments lest they perish, that is not to suffer the least Benefit

nefit bestow'd upon us, to be forgotten. But does not that perish which is confer'd upon the Ungrateful? Ingratitude is the Soul's worst Enemy: 'Tis the Destroyer of Merit, the Disperser of Virtues, and the Exterminator of all Good. Ingratitude is a burning Gale, which dries up the very Spring of Piety, the Dew of Mercy, and the Stream of Grace. Thus St. Bernard.

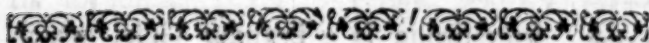


C H A P. L.

Of our Lord's Retreat from the Temple to hide himself when the Jews would have stoned him,

WHEN our Lord Jesus was one Day preaching in the Temple, and saying, among other things: *If any one keeps my Word, he shall never taste Death.* The Jews answer'd him: *You are then greater than our Father Abraham who died.* To which our Saviour answer'd: *Before Abraham was made, I am.* Which the Jews taking for an Impossibility and an Untruth, they took Stones, to stone him. But he hid himself, and retired out of the Temple. For as yet the Hour of his Passion was not come. Behold then with concern, how the Lord of all is contemptuously treated by his vile unworthy Creatures, and how meekly he gives Way to their Fury, retreats amidst the Croud, and

and with his Disciples patiently, and modestly withdraws from the Effects of their Rage, like the weakest among them.

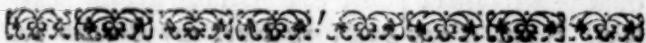


CHAP. LI.

Of the Jews seeking another time to stone him.

ANOTHER Time, at the Feast of the Dedication, our Lord being in Solomon's Porch was furrounded by these ravenous Wolves, who grinning with their Teeth said, *If thou art Christ tell us openly.* To whom the most meek and patient Lamb of God answer'd humbly, *I tell you so ; but you do not believe me.* Behold here then this affecting Scene. He speaks to them with humble Affability, and they with brutal Noise and Fury disturb and molest him : And at length, not able to contain the Venom in their Breasts, take Stones to throw at him. Nevertheless our Lord spoke to them in engaging Words, saying, *I have done many good things before you, for which of them is it that you would stone me ?* Because, say they, *you being a Man, would make yourself a God.* Observe their unaccountable Stupidity. They would know whether he is *Christ*, and when he proves it to them by Word and Actions they want to stone him, without being able to produce one excuse why they can not or ought not to believe him to

to be what he really is. But as his Hour was not yet come he, got safe out of their Hands, and retir'd to that Part of *Jordan* where *John* had baptised, which is distant from *Jerusalem* about eighteen Miles. Behold then our Saviour, and consider him and his Disciples under this Affliction, and mentally compassionate them with all the Tenderneſs you are Maſter of.



C H A P. LII.

Of the Raiſing of Lazarus.

THIS Miracle is a famous One, very ſolemn and worthy to be meditated on with utmoſt Devotion: Wherefore endeavour to render yourſelf as preſent in Mind to all that is here ſaid, as if you had actually been by, when it happen'd: And freely converſe not only with our Lord *Jeſus* and his Diſciples, but with all this bleſſed Family, ſo devoted to, and beloved by our Lord, that is, *Lazarus*, *Mary*, and *Martha*. *Lazarus* therefore being dangerously ill, and at the Point of Death, his Siſters who were very intimate with *Chriſt* ſent to him, to the Place whither he had retreated beyond *Jordan*, as aforeſaid, ſaying, *Our Brother Lazarus whom you love is ſick*. They ſent him no farther Meſſage, either becauſe they thought That ſufficient to a Friend, and an underſtanding One; or elſe becauſe they dared not invite him, knowing that the

the Chiefs of the *Jews* were laying Snares for him, and his Life. Our Lord *Jesus* hearing the News, remain'd Silent for two Days, and then among other things said to his Disciples, *Lazarus is dead, and I rejoice for your Sakes that I was not there.* Observe the Goodness, Love, and Diligence of our Lord with Relation to his Disciples. They return'd then, and came near *Bethany.* *Martha* as soon as she was informed of it ran to meet him, and falling at his Feet, said, *Lord, if you had been here, my Brother had not died.* Our Lord answer'd, that he should arise, and thence they began to talk of the Resurrection. Then he sent her for *Mary*, whom our Lord had a special Love for ; who no sooner knew of it, then she arose, and came to him with Haste, and falling at his Feet said the same thing. Our Lord seeing his Beloved afflicted, and in Tears, could not refrain from Tears himself: But wept with her. Behold him then with the devout Women and his Disciples weeping: And be moved with the Tenderness of the affecting Scene. After a while our Lord ask'd them: Where have you put him? Not that he did not know; but because as he was talking to human Creatures he spoke to them in a human Manner. They answer'd him, Lord come and see, and they led him to the Sepulchre. Whither he proceeded between the two devout Females, comforting and condoling with them till they were so consoled as almost to forget and drown all Sensations of Grief in their Attention to him.

When our Lord arrived at the Monument, he commanded the Stone to be removed, which *Martha* would have dissuaded him from saying,
That

That the Corps must smell strong having been four Days dead. But our Lord would have the Stone removed. Which done our Lord *Jesus*, lifting up his Eyes towards Heaven, said: *I give thee thanks, Father, that thou hast heard me; I knew indeed that you always bear me: But I speak on the Account of these, that they may know that thou hast sent me.* Behold him then, devout Reader, behold him thus praying, and consider his great Zeal for the Salvation of Souls. After this he cried out with a loud Voice, saying, *Lazarus come forth.* And he strait came to Life, and started forth of the Tomb, but tied as he was when buried. But the Disciples untied him, by *Christ's* Direction. *Lazarus* when he was untied, and with him his Sisters kneel'd down, and return'd thanks to *Jesus* for so great a Benefit: After which they conducted him Home. All who were present were extremely astonish'd at what they saw, and made it so publick that Multitudes from *Jerusalem* and all Parts came to see *Lazarus*. Insomuch that the Princes of the *Jews*, thinking themselves confounded, form'd Designs against his Life.



C H A P. LIII.

Of Christ's Cursing the Fig-tree.

THOUGH according to historical Narration the Curse of the Fig-tree, and the Presenting of the Adulterers in the Temple, be thought Posterior to *Christ's* Arrival in *Jerusalem*, yet as it seems most proper, after that Arrival, to employ our Meditations wholly on the Passion, and the Circumstances relating to it, I have therefore propos'd these two Facts in this Place. As then our Lord *Jesus* was going towards *Jerusalem* he was Hungry, and saw a Fig-tree very beautifully adorn'd with Branches and Foliage. Coming therefore nigh he beheld it more closely, and finding no Fruits on it, he cursed it; and it wither'd to the great Surprise of his Disciples. This was mystically done by our Saviour, who knew it to be a time not proper for such Trees to bear. And he did it to signify the Curse attending on Hypocrites and loquacious Persons, who are like well ornamented Trees without Fruit.



C H A P. LIV.

Of the Woman caught in Adultery.

THE perverse Pharisees and Princes of the Jews were perpetually watching, and studiously contriving how to surprise *Christ* by their Frauds and Wiles, and render him odious to the People. But their Arrows were turn'd upon themselves. As therefore a Woman had been caught in Adultery, and was to be stoned according to the Law; they brought her to him into the Temple to inquire of him, what should be done with her: Which they did to perplex him, that if he should direct the Law to be fulfill'd, they might cast upon him the odious Imputation of Cruelty and Want of Mercy: Or of Injustice, if he should offer to skreen her from the Law. But our All-wise Saviour seeing, and willing to avoid the Snare, humbly stoop'd down, and wrote with his Finger on the Ground: And the Gloss tells us, that what he wrote was the Sins of the Accusers. And this Writing was of such Efficacy that every one was able to read his own Sins there. So that when our Lord rais'd himself again, and said to them, *Let him among you who is without Sin throw the first Stone,* they parted astonish'd and confounded. Though *Christ* when he had pronounced the Sentence was gracious enough to stoop again, for the Sake of his envious Adversaries to save them from Confusion. And thus did their Craft evaporate and come to nothing.

After

After her Accusers were gone, our Lord admonish'd the Woman and dismiss'd her. Contemplate then our divine Redeemer in all these Circumstances according to the Rule I have prescribed to you in the Beginning of this Work.



CHAP. LV.

Of the Conspiracy of the Jews against Christ, and of his Flight into the City of Ephraim.

THE Time approaching when our Lord *Jesus* design'd to work our Redemption by the Effusion of his precious Blood, the Devil arm'd his Ministers, and sharpen'd the Malice of their Hearts against him, even to Death, and the good Works of our Lord, especially the Raising of *Lazarus*, but incensed them the more to Envy and Rage. Whence able no longer to contain their Fury the High Priests and Pharisees held a Council in which *Caiphas* prophesying, they deliberated, to kill the most innocent Lamb of God. Oh wicked Council! Oh reprobate Guides of the People, and evil Counsellors! Wretches what are you doing? To what Excess does your Frenzy transport you? What a Sentence is this? Where is the Occasion for your murdering the Lord your God? Is he not in the Midst of you, though you know him not, searching your Reins and Hearts?

Hearts? But thus is it expedient that it should be done as ye have desired. His heavenly Father has deliver'd him up into your Hands, by you he is to be put to Death, but, alas, his Death shall not prove expedient to you. He indeed shall die and rise again to save his People; but you shall perish from among his People.

This Resolution of the Council was made Public, and our Lord was acquainted with it, but his Wisdom willing to give Way to their Wrath, especially as every thing was not completely fulfill'd concerning him, he went to that Side of the Country nigh the Desert to the City of *Ephraim*: Thus flies the humble Lord of the highest Heavens before the Face of his most vile and abject Servants. Contemplate here our Lord *Jesus Christ* and his Disciples under the reiterated Affliction of a painful and necessitous Flight. Meditate likewise how our blessed Lady his immaculate Mother, and her Sisters remain'd with the *Magdalen*, whom our Lord before his Departure consoles with the Promise of his speedy Return.



CHAP. LVI.

*How our Lord return'd to Bethania, where
Mary Magdalen anointed his Feet.*

AS we have seen above that our Lord *Jesus* for our Instruction used Prudence in retreating from Danger, to shew us, that according to Exigence of Time and Place we ought to decline with all lawful Caution the Fury of Persecutors: So now he makes Use of Fortitude, returning of his own Accord when the due Time approaches, that he may meet his Passion, and deliver himself up into the Hands of his Persecutors. And as before he made Use of Temperance when he declined the Multitude who sought to make him King; now he exerts his Justice when he prepares to demand the Honours of a King, and that the People strew Branches of Palm and Olive before. Though how modestly does he receive this Honour sitting humbly on an Ass! Our divine Master made use here particularly of these four Virtues. Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance for our Instruction. They are call'd Cardinal Virtues, that is, as it were, principal Virtues, because from them all other moral Virtues flow.

Our Lord then on the Sabbath-Day before his Triumph of Palms, return'd to *Bethania*, about two Miles from *Jerusalem*, where a Supper was prepared for him at the House of *Simon* the Leper, where were present *Lazarus*, *Martha*, and *Mary*. 'Twas at that time *Mary*
pour'd

JESUS CHRIST.

243

pour'd on the Head of *Jesus* a Pound of precious Ointment, and anointed his Head, and Feet, And what she once did in the same House out of Contrition she now reiterates out of Devotion. For she loved him above all things, and could never be satiated with honouring him.

But the Traitor *Judas* thought much of this, and murmur'd at it: When our Saviour answer'd for her, and defended her vigorously. Nevertheless the Traitor remain'd so greatly offended at it that he from thence took Occasion to betray him, and on the *Wednesday* following sold him for thirty Pieces of Silver, Behold our divine Saviour then here supping with his Friends, and conversing with them for the few remaining Days till his Passion. But chiefly in the House of *Lazarus* and his Sisters for that was his usual Refuge: There he eat by Day, and there he reposed by Night with his Disciples.

There likewise our blessed Lady with his Sisters reposed, whom this devout Family, and chiefly *Magdalen* honour'd, revered, and attended, with Constancy and Affection. Behold then this immaculate Virgin-Mother struck with Excess of Fear for her dearly beloved Son, from whom she never was apart any more than was absolutely Necessary. When our Lord in defending the *Magdalen* from the Traitor's Murmurs, said, pouring this Ointment on my Body, she has done it for my Funeral, think you not that these Words like a Dagger pierced the Soul of the blessed Mother? For what could he say more express to foretell his Death? So all

Q 2

were

were struck with Fear; and, full of anxious disturbing Thoughts, talking to each other like Persons in the utmost Confusion of Adversity, none knew what Advice to give or what to take: And all were in the utmost Terrors whenever he went to *Jerusalem*, which however he did every Day. For from this *Saturday* to the Day of his last Supper he said many things to the *Jews*, and wrought wonders openly in *Jerusalem*, all which I intend to pass in Silence, except his Riding on the *Ass*, lest our Meditation be interrupted: For we are now on the Verge of his Passion.

See then, devout Reader, that you summon all your Recollection, that nothing may distract or divert you from the solemn Mysteries which preceed or attend his Passion: But be watchful and attentive to the Whole and every Circumstance of it to reap the Benefit, he designs you by it.



C H A P. LVII.

How our Lord Jesus came to Jerusalem, on Palm-Sunday, riding upon an Ass.

MYsteries were daily wrought, and the Scriptures fulfill'd, by our Lord *Jesus*, and the Time drawing nigh, he was desirous of redeeming Mankind through the bitter Passion of his sacred Humanity. Wherefore on the next *Sunday*, very early in the Morning, he prepared to go to *Jerusalem* in a Manner he had never gone before, that he might fulfill the Words of the Prophet which were written to that Purpose.

When his blessed Mother found that he was resolv'd to depart, she endeavour'd earnestly to perswade him from it, and with tender Affection said: My beloved Son whither will you go? Why will you go among those whom you know conspire against you, and seek to kill you? I beseech you therefore not to go among them. And his Disciples and *St. Mary Magdalen* in the same Manner entreated him, and beseech'd him to stay: Go not among them, O Lord (say they) we pray you, since you know they seek your Death, and if you throw yourself into their Hands this Day, they will secure you, and execute their wicked Purpose. Oh, how sincerely did they love him, and how sensibly were they affected at the Apprehension of every Thing that might hurt him. But he who

Q 3

thirsted

thirsted after the Salvation of Man had dispos'd it otherwise, wherefore he said: 'Tis the Will of my Father that I go, come ye also, fear not, for he will protect us, and this Night we shall return hither without Hurt. And immediately he set out for his Journey, and that small but faithful Company follow'd him.

When he came to a certain Place in the Way, which was call'd *Bethphage*, he sent two of his Disciples into the City of *Jerusalem*, and bid them fetch him an Ass and her Foal, that were tied in the Highway, for the Use of such poor People who had no Beasts of their own. When they were brought, the Disciples laid their Cloaths upon them, and our Saviour meekly set himself upon the Ass, and riding in that humble Manner came into the City of *Jerusalem*. Consider him here attentively, and behold how in this, he reproveth the Pomp and Glory of worldly Vanity. The Beast he rid on was not deck'd with rich Furniture, but instead of golden Trappings, wrought Saddles, and curious Bridles, all the Ornament consisted in poor Cloaths, hempen Cords and Halters, though he was *the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*. Now when the People heard of his coming, through the Fame of raising *Lazarus* from the Dead, they went out to meet him, and received him as a King with joyful Hymns and Songs; and shewing great Tokens of Gladness for his coming they strew the Ways with the Boughs and Branches of the Trees, and spread their Cloaths under his Ass's Feet as he pass'd.

But notwithstanding this, he mingled Tears with their Joy, for when he beheld the City
he

he wept over it, saying: *If thou had'st known,*
&c.

It is manifest in Scripture, that our Lord *Jesus* wept three different Times. Once at the Death of *Lazarus*, to shew the wretched State of Mankind, who incur'd the Pain of Death through the Offence of our first Parents. *Secondly*, He wept on this Day, for the Blindness and Ignorance of Men, and namely for the People of *Jerusalem*, who would not know the Time of their gracious Visitation. *Thirdly*, He wept in his Passion, in beholding the Malice and Perversity of Man's Heart, and considering that his Passion being sufficient for the Redemption of all the World, yet many would not partake of it. Concerning this last Weeping, St. *Paul* to the *Hebrews*, says thus, speaking of the Time of his Passion: *Who with a strong Cry, --- and Tears was heard for his Reverence,* Heb. v. We are taught then from sacred Text, That *Christ* wept these three Times. But the holy Church relates that he wept a fourth Time, that is, in his tender Infancy, and therefore she sings: *The tender Infant, as he lies in the cold Manger, shakes and cries.* This he did to conceal from the Devil the Mystery of his Incarnation.

Now our Lord *Jesus* weeping on this Day so abundantly over *Jerusalem*, and with so sorrowful a Heart, both for the eternal Damnation, and also for the temporal Destruction and Ruin of their City, his holy Mother with all the Apostles could not contain themselves from weeping.

Q 4

Thus

Thus rideth our Lord upon that humble Beast, having instead of Princes, Nobles, and Barons, his poor Disciples about him, together with his Mother and some other devout Women, who both with Fear and Reverence, devoutly follow'd him. He enter'd the City in Triumph, being honour'd by all the People, whose Shouts and Acclamations put the whole City in great Commotion. Our Lord went first into the Temple, and a second Time cast out the Buyers, and Sellers. He stood there openly in the Temple, preaching and answering the Questions of the Scribes and Pharisees all the Day, till it drew towards Night. But notwithstanding the great Honour which before they had done him, yet they permitted him and his Disciples to remain the whole Day fasting, their being none among them that invited him to eat or drink. And when Night was come, he went with his Disciples to his homely Lodging at *Bethany*, departing privately from the City with his small Company, who in the Morning had enter'd publickly with so great Honour. Hence may we learn how little Regard is to be had to worldly Honour, which lasteth so short a Time, and so slightly vanisheth away.



C H A P. LVIII.

What our Lord Jesus did from Palm-Sunday to the Thursday following.

OUR Lord *Jesus*, the Fountain of all Charity, desirous to express both in Word and Deed his perfect Charity he bore as well to his Enemies as to his Friends, to the End that no Man should be lost but all might be saved, when it drew now towards the End of his Life; and the Time of his Passion was near at Hand, he labour'd diligently both in teaching and preaching the Gospel continually to the People, especiall on those three Days, that is, on *Palm-Sunday*, and on the *Monday* and *Tuesday* following. On which Days he came very early in the Morning into the Temple and preach'd unto, and taught the People, and disputed with the Scribes and Pharisees, answering their subtle Questions by which they sought to entrap him, in this Manner was he busied for those three Days from Morning till Night.

But as it would be too long to treat in particular of all that pass'd, during that Time, between our blessed Saviour and the *Jews*, it being also foreign to the Passion which we are now to speak of, therefore passing over all the Examples and Parables he made use of to reprove and convince them, we will specially consider how the chief Priests and Pharisees perceiving the People to be well disposed towards

wards him, and fearing to execute their Malice against him openly, they privately and subtly conspired together how they might take him in his Words, and accuse him of saying something against their Law, or against paying the Tribute due to *Cæsar*, and thence condemn him as worthy of Death. But our Lord, to whom the Secrets of all Mens Hearts are open, knowing their Treachery and Malice, answer'd them so wisely that they were disappointed in their Purpose; and were so much confounded that they durst not ask him any more Questions. And then he severely reprov'd the Pride, the Hypocrisy, the Covetousness, and many other wicked Practices of the Scribes and Pharisees, saying to them in these Words: *Wo be to you Scribes and Pharisees who love, and seek after worldly Glory*: Thus he proceeded, many Ways rebuking their evil Lives and Wickedness: Yet nevertheless he commanded the People to hear and fulfill their Doctrine, but not to follow their wicked Example. At Length he repeated their great Ingratitude and Unkindness towards him, and especially that of the City of *Jerusalem*, inasmuch as he was often desirous to have gather'd them under his Wings, even as a Hen doth her Chickens, but they would not, wherefore he foretold them of their Destruction both temporal and eternal, and thus he left them and went out of the Temple; and with his Disciples, and many others of the *Jews* that believed in him, went to *Mount Olivet*, where he taught them, how to prepare for their latter End, and farther told them of the Day of Judgment, in which the Good should be

be placed at the Right-Hand of God in everlasting Life, and the Wicked on the Left-Hand in perpetual Misery and Torment.

Thus ended our Lord his public Preaching to the *Jews* on the *Tuesday* Night before his Passion, after which he said to his Disciples in private: *Know ye that after two Days the Son of Man shall be betray'd into the Hands of Sinners to be crucified.* Oh what a sorrowful Speech was this to all his faithful Followers: But the false Traitor *Judas* was glad to hear it, consulting within his Heart, by the Instigation of the Devil, who had enter'd into him, how or in what Manner, by his Death, he might satisfy his Covetousness. For which Purpose he slept not that Night, but early on the Morrow, which was *Wednesday* Morning, when the chief Priests and Scribes were assembled together in the House of *Caiphas*, *Judas* went to them, and offer'd, for a Reward, to deliver him unto them. Wherefore they being glad of the Offer appointed him Thirty Pence: And thus was the Death of our Redeemer effected thro' Covetousness, Treachery, and Malice. Hence had that wicked Traitor the Price of the Ointment, which before he had murmur'd at as lost, and from that Time he sought an Opportunity how he might betray him.

This was the wicked Practice of cursed *Judas*, and the *Jews* on the *Wednesday* following. But what may we imagine did our Lord *Jesus* and his blessed Company? He went not into *Jerusalem*, nor appear'd publickly among the *Jews* that Day, but spent his whole Time in Prayer, and arm'd himself for the Redemption of Mankind which

which he came to accomplish, praying not only for his Friends that believed in him and loved him, but also for his profess'd Enemies, fulfilling now in himself the holy Perfection of Charity, which before he had taught his Disciples, in bidding them to pray for their Enemies, and for those that should prosecute and hate them.

Our Lord *Jesus* knowing the Malice of *Judas* his wicked Traitor, and also how the *Jews* were bent against him, he pray'd to his heavenly Father for them. And as it was the last Day that he was to dwell and converse so familiarly with his holy Mother and his Apostles, he comforted them with his holy Word, as he was wont to do, but he did it the more especially now, to strengthen them against the great Sorrows they were to suffer at his Passion. And he comforted his blessed Mother and St. *Mary Magdalen* in a more particular Manner, who continually thirsted to drink in the Fountain of his holy Grace, of which may he, of his infinite Bounty and Love, make us all Partakers. *Amen.*



CHAP.

C H A P. LIX.

Of our Lord's Supper the Night before his Passion, and of many Circumstances belonging to it.

WHEN the Time was come in which our Lord *Jesus* had disposed all Things for the Working the Salvation of his People, and redeeming them, not with corruptible Gold or Silver, but with his most precious Blood: Before he departed, by Death, from his Apostles, he would first make them a memorable Supper which might serve them for a future Token, and might fulfill those Mysteries which till then had not been fulfilled.

This Supper was truly magnificent, and the Things very wonderful and great which our Lord *Jesus* wrought there for you. Concerning which, Four Things chiefly occur which are most worthy your devout Meditation. *First*, The Supper itself. *Secondly*, His washing the Feet of his Disciples. *Thirdly*, The Institution of the Sacrament of his blessed Body and Blood. And *Fourthly*, The Composition of a beautiful Sermon by our Lord *Jesus*. All which we will treat of in their proper Order.

First then consider, how *Peter* and *John* were sent by our Lord, to a certain Friend on Mount Sion, where there was a large Room, to prepare the *Pasche*. Our Lord himself with the rest of his Disciples enter'd the City on
Thursday

Thursday when the Day was almost spent, and repair'd to the same Place. Behold him then, pious Reader, standing amidst his Apostles, and discoursing on heavenly Subjects, while in the mean Time the *Pasche* was preparing by some of the Seventy two Disciples. When all Things were ready, the beloved St. *John*, who was most familiar with our Lord, and who was diligent in seeing that Things should be in Order, came to him and said: Lord, when it pleaseth you to sup, all Things are ready. Wherefore our blessed Saviour with his twelve Apostles went up: And *John* went always next to him, for there was none who loved him more truly, or that was more beloved by him again. For when he was taken he followed him, when the rest fled, and was present at his Death and Passion, and after his Death he departed not from him till he saw him buried, therefore at this Supper he sat nearest unto him, although he was younger than any of the rest.

When our Lord *Jesus* with his twelve Apostles came to the Table, he first devoutly gave Thanks, then the *Paschal Lamb* being brought he blessed it, and they all sat down, and *John* next unto *Jesus*. The Table was a Board on the Ground, being four-square, and made of diverse Boards join'd together, and as they say, who have seen the same at *Rome*, in the Church of St. *John Lateran*, it has a Square at each Corner sufficient to contain three People, one at each Right-angle, the Fourth being one with the main Square of the Table, so that the Disciples sitting at each Square, and our Lord among them, they might reach into the main Square in

the Midst of them, and all eat out of one Dish, as appeareth when he said : *He that putteth his Hand in the Dish with me, he it is that shall betray me.* Thus far may we imagine of their first sitting down to the Board. But we must farther observe, that when they began to eat of the *Paschal Lamb*, they all arose and stood upright, holding their Staves in their Hands, according to the Law of *Moses*, which our Lord *Jesus* came to accomplish. Nevertheless, tho' they stood then, yet they afterwards sat down again, as the Gospel tells us, otherwise St. *John* could not have rested his Head upon our Saviour's Breast, as the Scripture saith he did.

When the *Paschal Lamb* was brought to the Table, being roasted, according to the Law of *Moses*, our Lord *Jesus* who was the true Lamb of God without any Blemish of Sin, sitting among them as he that chiefly minister'd and serv'd the rest, took the Lamb into his blessed Hands, divided it, and gave it to his Disciples, and bid them to eat it joyfully. But tho' they eat as he had bid them ; yet they could not be very chearful, being aw'd by a Dread, lest any Thing should farther happen to their divine Master contrary to their Expectation. And as they were eating, he began openly to relate to them the sorrowful Subject of his Passion, which was then to come to pass : And among other Things, he said : *I have desired to eat this Paschal Lamb with you before I suffer, Luke xxii. For verily I say unto you, That one of you shall betray me. Mat. xxvi,* These Words of our blessed Lord reached the Bowels of the Apostles, and like a sharp-pointed Sword pierced their Hearts, wherefore they left off eating,

eating, and looking with Sorrow upon one another, at length, after a while, they said : *Lord, is it I?* Here we have a Subject of great Compassion, both in Regard to our blessed Lord and his holy Disciples, who were doubtless filled with all possible Grief and Affliction. But *Judas* the Traitor continued still eating, as if the Word *betray* seem'd in no Manner to appertain unto him. *St. John* however, at the Importunities of *St. Peter*, ask'd him, saying : Lord, who is it that shall betray thee ? And our Lord privately reveal'd it to him, as to his singularly beloved, and most familiar Disciple. *St. John* being much astonish'd, was inwardly pierced to the Heart with Grief, and turning himself towards *Jesus*, he laid his Head upon his sacred Breast. Here behold the great Bignity of our Lord *Jesus* who thus familiarly permits his beloved Disciple *St. John* to recline and rest himself on his Breast. Oh how tenderly did they love each other ? This was a sweet Place of Rest to *St. John*, and most profitable to all Christians : Consider likewise how the other Disciples sit sorrowful, and eat not, being troubled with inward Grief at the Words he had spoke to them, that is, that he should be betray'd by one of their Company, wherefore they look'd sorrowful on each other, as not knowing what Remedy to apply to bring them Comfort in this Case. And thus much may suffice at present for the first Point in Relation to this corporal Supper, and Consummation of the Law by eating the Paschal Lamb.

Touching the second Point which is the Washing of the Disciples Feet, you are to know that

that after the Supper was over our Lord *Jesus* rose up from the Table, and the Disciples with him, not knowing what he was then to do, or whether he was going. He went down with them however into another Room, beneath that in which they had sup'd, as they relate who have seen the Place, there he bid them sit down, and calling for Water, stript himself of his Cloaths, and having bound himself round with a linnen Cloth he pour'd Water into a Stone Bason, and set it before St. *Peter's* Feet, and then he kneel'd down to wash them. *Peter*, being greatly astonish'd at what his Lord was going to do, absolutely declined, and refused him. But when he heard the Threats of our Lord, and that he should have no Part in his Glory if he permitted him not to do it, he humbly consented and submitted to his divine Pleasure.

Here now, pious Reader, let us devoutly consider the humble Works of our Lord *Jesus*, and be diligently attentive to all that follows, it being a Subject of great Wonder and Speculation: For what a Sight was it to behold the King of Heaven and the Lord of all Majesty humbly stooping himself to, and kneeling down at the Feet of poor Fishermen who were sitting, to behold him washing their Feet, wiping them with a Towel; and devoutly kissing them? And what much more exalts his Humility is to behold him performing this mean Office to *Judas* the Traitor, who was to betray and sell him. Oh perverse and wicked Wretch! Oh hard and cruel Heart, more harden'd then the Stone, and more impenetrable than the Diamond: which is neither moved at so great Humility, nor melteth

R

or

or becomes soft with the Heat of so great Charity, and who trembleth not with Fear at the Presence of so high a Majesty on his Knees before thee, but on the contrary you persist still in your wicked Design of betraying and seeking the Destruction of him who is Innocence itself, and whose Bounty and ineffable Goodness you experience even to the last. But wo to thee, oh wretch, thou still remaining inflexible, will infallibly bring forth what thou hast most execrably conceived, and in the End not he but thou shalt perish! 'Tis undoubtedly a Subject of great Surprise to consider the ineffable Bounty and Meekness of our Lord *Jesus*, and to see the notorious Obstinacy and Malice of the wicked Traitor *Judas*.

When this Ceremony was ended, he again returned to the same Place where he had supp'd, where all being seated as before, he began to exhort them all to imitate the Example he had given them. Wherefore we may here contemplate how our Lord *Jesus Christ* left us this Night of his Passion an Example of Five sublime Virtues; that is, of Humility, as we have seen in his washing of his Disciples Feet; of Charity, in the Institution of the adorable Sacrament of his Body and Blood, and in the Sermon he then made which is full of charitable Admonitions; of Patience, in bearing with his wicked Traitor, and suffering many Reproaches when he was taken and led as a Thief to Judgment; of Obedience, in going to suffer, and meeting an approbrious Death to fulfill the Will of his Father; and of Prayer, by praying three different Times in the Garden of *Gethsemany*.

Let

Let us then endeavour to imitate him in these Virtues; and hence proceed to a Consideration of the the third Point, that is, of the Institution of the most adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist.

And in relation to this, we cannot but with Astonishment behold that most beloved Condescendence and sublime Charity with which he vouchsafed to give himself to us, ordaining that Sacrament as a Means whereby he might leave us that divine and heavenly Food of his sacred Body and Blood. Wherefore after he had wash'd his Disciples Feet, to shew them the ending of the Sacrifices of the Old Law, and the Beginning of the New Testament, and to make himself our only true Sacrifice, He took Bread into his blessed Hands, and lifting up his Eyes to his heavenly Father, he blessed it, and instituted the Sacrament of his Body, and giving it to his Disciples, said: *Take and eat, for this is my Body which shall be deliver'd for you.* And in the same Manner he took the Chalice and said: *Drink ye all of this, for this is my Blood which shall be shed for you; and for many in the Remission of Sins.*

Here, Christian Reader, attentively consider how devoutly, how diligently, and how truly our blessed Lord Jesus changed the Substance of the Bread into his precious Body, and afterwards with his own blessed Hands distributed it himself to that beloved and holy Company, enjoining them to keep it as a Memorial of his Love, saying: *Do this in Remembrance of me.* This is that sweet and precious Memorial which renders Man's Soul most grateful and pleasing to God,

as often as it is worthily received, and therefore the Consideration of this most excellent Gift of Love ought to enflame our Souls with Love and wholly transform us into the Giver. For what could he have given us, more dear, more sweet, and more precious than himself? He whom we receive in the Sacrament of the Altar, is the self-same Son of God *Christ Jesus*, that took Flesh and Blood, and was born of the Virgin *Mary*, and suffer'd Death on the Cross for us, rose the third Day from Death to Life, ascended up into Heaven, sitteth at the Right-hand of the Father, and shall come again at the Last Day to judge both the Living and the Dead, in whose Power is both Life and Death, who made both Heaven and Hell, and finally, who can either reward us with the Joys of the one or punish us with the eternal Pains of the other: He, the self-same God and Man is contain'd in that small Host in the Form of Bread, which is daily offer'd to God the Father. He is our Lord *Jesus Christ*, Son of the eternal and living God. Touching the fourth and last Point to be consider'd, Let us now behold how this sovereign Master after this Institution, made to his Disciples a most beautiful Sermon, full of heavenly Sweetness, and of divine Love and Charity. For having given to them that blessed Sacrament, and amongst the rest also to his wicked Traitor *Judas*, he said to him: *That which thou do'st do it quickly*, John xiii. and immediately that cursed Traitor went to the Chief Priests, to whom he had sold him on the *Wednesday* before, and ask'd them for Help to apprehend and take him.

JESUS CHRIST.

261

In the mean Time he made the said Sermon, which he preached to his Disciples, giving to them his *Peace*, and chiefly recommended to them three principal Virtues above all others, that is to say: *Faith, Hope, and Charity*. Which Charity he expressed in these Words, saying: *I give you a new Commandment, which is, that you love one another, for by this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples if ye love one another.* And again: *If you love me keep my Commandments, And whosoever loveth me, and keepeth my Sayings, then shall my Father love him, and we will come to him and dwell with him.* And in many other Places he particularly recommended to them this Charity, as a worthy Legacy which he would now bequeath to them in this his Last Will and Testament.

Secondly, He established them in Faith and confirm'd them more strongly in the Belief of his Divinity, saying: *Let not your Hearts be troubled, and fear ye not, as ye have believed in God, so believe in me also.* Farther shewing them that the Father and he is one, and that tho' as Man he was less than his Father, yet he was equal with him as he was God; and therefore he reprehended *Philip* who asked him to shew them the Father, saying: That he who saw him saw the Father. And in the Conclusion of this Point, he said: *If ye believe not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, yet at least believe me, for the Works that ye have seen me do, because no other could do the Works which I have done.*

Thirdly, He comforted them in *Hope* many Ways. And *First*, as to the Effects of Prayer

Prayer he said : *If ye abide in me, and my Words abide in you, whatever ye ask, it shall be given you.* Again, he arm'd them in regard to all Manner of Tribulations, and the Contempt of the World, saying thus : *If the World hate you, ye know that it hated me before you.* Thus comforting their Hope with Patience in Time of Persecution, by his own Example who was their Lord and Master.

Lastly, He fortified them lest they should despair by Reason of his leaving them, telling them, that they should conceive great Sorrow for his Absence for a short Time, in Regard to the Death he was to suffer, but that afterwards that Sorrow should be changed into unspeakable Joy, by Means of his glorious Resurrection from Death, and his Ascension to his Father, and by the Coming of the Holy Ghost whom he would send to comfort them in all their Afflictions, and teach them all Truth. And he concluded with these Words, saying : *All this I have spoken to you, that ye might have Peace in me, in the World you shall suffer much Sorrow and Affliction, but be of good Heart, for I have overcome the World ; which was the same as to say, and so shall ye through my Grace,*

After this our Lord *Jesus* lifting up his Eyes towards Heaven, and addressing himself to his Father, said : *Father, keep them whom thou hast given me. When I was with them I kept them. But now I come to thee. Holy Father, for them do I pray : Not for the World, and not for them only do I pray, but for them also that by their Word shall believe in me.*
 Father

Father whom thou hast given me, I will, that where I am, they also may be with me, that they may see my Glory. These with many other things most moving and piercing he spoke in Presence of his Disciples. And it is certainly surprising to imagine how they, who loved him so tenderly, could possibly bear to hear them without melting with Grief and Sorrow. And doubtless whoever hath Grace deeply to examine and dwell by devout Meditation upon the sweet Doctrine of our blessed Lord and Saviour, cannot but be inwardly kindled with his divine Love in beholding so great Charity, Benignity, Goodness, and other things he was pleased to shew, this Night of his sacred Passion. Consider him while he speaks, behold in how affable, devout, and effectual Manner he imprints on the Hearts of his Disciples, all he relates to them, and in some Measure feeds their Souls with the pleasing Aspect of his divine Countenance. Consider likewise the Disciples how sorrowful they stand to hear him, hanging down their Heads, fetching deep sighs, and bitterly weeping, being brimful of extreme Sorrow and Affliction, as *Christ* himself bears witness, saying: *Because I have spoke these things, sorrow hath fill'd your Heart.* And among the rest consider St. *John*, who above all the rest was most familiar with our blessed Lord, how attentively he beholds his beloved Master, and with a most tender Anxiousness takes particular Notice of every Word he says.

At length, among other things which he spoke to them he said: *Arise, let us go hence* Oh what Fear may we well imagine did then

seize their Hearts, not knowing as yet whither, or in what Manner he would go, suspecting greatly that the Time was now come, in which they were to be separated from him. They arose however and follow'd him, each striving which should be nearest to him, and all flocking round him as the Chickens round the Hen, they crouded in upon him, first one and then another, though the earnest Desire they had of being near him, and hearing his divine Doctrine: All which he, with great Patience and Benignity suffer'd them to do. At last, having ended what he had to say to them, he brought them into a Garden on the other Side of the River *Cedron*, and there fixing himself in Prayer he waited for *Judas* the Traitor, and the rest that were to apprehend him. As we shall see in that which follows of his Passion.



CHAP. LX.

*Of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and first of his Prayer in the Garden.*

TIS now time for us to enter upon the Subject of the Passion of our Lord *Jesus*. But whoever desires to Glory in the Cross and Passion of *Jesus Christ*, must devoutly apply himself to the pious and frequent Meditation of it, the Mysteries of which, as well as every other thing that was done relating to it, if they were truly consider'd with all the Attention of the Mind, would undoubtedly transform each Votary into a new Man. Wherefore, pious Reader, banishing from your Heart all the vain and troublesome Cares of this Life, and all Sorts of wandering and distracting Thoughts which may hinder your Attention, and disturb the Tranquillity of your Soul, endeavour as far as possible to render yourself attentive as if present at the dismal Tragedy of this Sorrowfull, and bitter Passion.

And first then, behold (as is before mention'd) how our Lord *Jesus* went over the River *Cedron* into a Garden whither he was often used to resort with his Disciples to pray. He took with him three of his most beloved Disciples, *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, and telling them that his Heart was heavy and sorrowful even unto Death, he bid them watch with him in Prayer. And then going about a Stone's cast from them, and throwing himself on his Knees, he made his devout

vout and humble Prayer to his Father. We read that he often pray'd thus: But he then pray'd for us, as our Advocate, but now he prayed for himself. Have Compassion on him, and admire his most profound Humility. Who being God co-eternal and co-equal with his Father, forgets as it were his being so, and prays like Man, humbly offering up Petitions to his Father, thus truly expressing his most perfect and submissive Obedience to him. But what does he pray for? He prays to his heavenly Father, to take from him, if possible, the bitter Chalice of his approaching Passion, and that he might not die that cruel Death of the Cross, if it could any Ways be agreeable to his divine Will. But his Prayer was not heard in this, since his Father would have him to die, and would not spare him though his true and only Son, but thus delivers him up for us all. *For so God loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son.* John iii. Our Lord Jesus therefore submitted to this Obedience, and faithfully fulfilled the divine Will of his Father. Consider likewise the unspeakable Charity both of the Father and the Son towards us. 'Twas for us that this Death was inflicted upon him, and he suffer'd it through the Excess of Love he bore us. Wherefore our blessed Lord prays still to his heavenly Father, saying: Most merciful and gracious Father, full of Pity and Compassion: *I beseech thee to bear my Prayer, and despise not my Supplication: Attend unto me and bear me. I am sorrowful in my Affliction; my Soul is vexed within me, and my Heart is troubled.* — *Incline thine Ear towards me, and bearken to the Voice of my Supplication.* It pleas'd

pleas'd thee, Oh heavenly Father, to send me into this World to satisfy for the Sin of Man committed against us, and presently I was ready to thy Command, and said : Lo I go: And I have farther declar'd thy Word and Truth to them, dwelling among them, in many Troubles from my Youth, fulfilling thy Will in all thou hast commanded me, and am also ready to accomplish to the utmost those Things which are to be done for their Redemption : Yet thou seest, Oh most beloved Father, how maliciously my Enemies have conspir'd against me, I have ever done them good, and bestowed Benefits on those that hated me, and they have again rewarded me with Evil for Good, and returned me Hatred for Love, and at this present Time they have corrupted my Disciple who hath sold me to them for *Thirty pence*, and made him be the Instrument to destroy me. Oh Father, if it be thy Will, take from me, I beseech thee, this bitter Cup of my Passion, but if not, thy blessed Will be done. If they will not acknowledge me for thy only Son, yet as I have ever lived a righteous and innocent Life, and wrought so many good Works amongst them, they ought not to be so cruel and maliciously bent against me. Remember, Oh heavenly Father, that I have always stood before thee to speak Good for them, and to turn away thy Wrath from them. And shall Good be recompensed with Evil? For they have digged a Pit for my Soul, and prepared a most shameful Death for me. Wherefore, thou, Oh Lord, who seest all Things, be not silent, forsake me not, but rise up to help me ; for great Tribulation is near at Hand, and there is no other that can deliver me.

me. My Adversaries are all before thee, that seek my Soul. And my Heart hath expected Reproach and I am full of Heaviness.

This done our Lord *Jesus* came again to his Disciples, and finding them heavy with Sleep he awakened them, and bid them to watch and pray, which he did a second and third Time, and then returning again to his Prayers, he said as before, and added, saying : Oh, most righteous Father, if it be so that thou hast absolutely ordain'd that I must suffer a most cruel Death on the Cross for Man's Redemption, thy most holy Will be done. But first I recommend to thy Care my beloved Mother, and my Disciples, which hitherto I have always taken Care of. And while he was fervent in his holy Prayer, his most precious Blood gush'd forth like Sweat, from all Parts of his sacred Body, and ran down abundantly upon the Ground through the extreme Violence of his bitter Agony. Here is a great Subject of Grief and Sorrow, which ought to be sufficient to move the hardest Heart to Compassion at the extreme Anguish and Pain which our blessed Lord *Jesus* suffer'd at that Time for our Sake. For by Virtue of his Divinity he foresaw all the Pains and Torments which were to be inflicted upon him, and therefore, according to his Humanity, his tender Body trembled with Fear, and fell into a most violent and bloody Sweat. But hence let us learn to check our frequent Impatience from this, that our Lord prayed three Times to his Father before he received any Answer.

Now at the third Time, when he was in the profoundest Anguish of Spirit, behold an An-

gel

gel from God, the Prince of the celestial Hierarchy, St. *Michael* came down and stood before him, comforted him and said : Hail, Oh my blessed Lord *Jesus* ! your devout Prayer and bloody Sweat I have offer'd up to thy Father in the Presence of the whole Court of Heaven, and we all humbly prostrate before him have besought him to take from thee that bitter Draught of thy Passion. But thy heavenly Father answering us, said : My blessed Son knows full well that the Redemption of Mankind, which out of our sovereign Love to him we so much desire, cannot be conveniently fulfill'd without the shedding of his Blood, wherefore if he is desirous of their Salvation he must die for them. To whom our Lord *Jesus* again replied : I desire above all Things the Salvation of Man's Soul, and therefore I chuse rather chearfully to suffer Death, by which the Souls which my heavenly Father hath made to his own Image and Likeness, may be saved, than not to die, and that those Souls should not be redeemed : Wherefore my Father's Will be done. The Angel then again replying, said : Be now of good Heart, my Lord, and act couragiously, for it behoves the High to work great Things, and to suffer manfully most severe and difficult Trials, thy Pains and Troubles shall soon pass away and Joy and Glory shall ever after succeed. And thy heavenly Father is and will be always with you, and will keep and preserve from Harm thy blessed Mother and thy Disciples according to thy Desire.

Our most humble Lord *Jesus* rose up, and meekly accepted this small Comfort from the Angel, the Creator from the Creature, reputing himself

himself for that Time even inferior to them. Wherefore he was sorrowful as Man, was comforted by the Angel as Man, took his Leave of him as Man, and as Man pray'd him to recommend him to his Father, and to the whole Court of celestial Spirits. And thus a third Time he riseth from Prayer with his Body covered with Blood, whom thou may'st behold, with inward Compassion, wiping himself or bathing in the River, all which is devoutly to be consider'd with Sorrow and Compassion, since it could not possibly be endured without great Bitterness and Pain.

Here we must observe, that many of the Fathers and learned Doctors say, that our Lord *Jesus* prayed in this Manner, not merely for fear of his bitter Passion, but chiefly through the Pity and Mercy which he had towards his chosen People the *Jews*, lamenting that they would be lost by not believing in him, and putting him to Death. For surely it was most ungrateful in them to crucify him, since he was of their Race; and was also prophecied in their Law, to be the true *Messias*, *Christ Jesus*, who was to come, and who had farther shew'd them so many Signs, and given them so many Proofs of his singular Love. Wherefore (as some of the holy Fathers say) he prayed in this Manner, saying: Oh heavenly Father, if it could stand with the Salvation of my Brethren the *Jews*, and that the *Gentiles* might by some other Means be converted to thee, I would be glad to refuse this bitter Passion: But if otherwise it be expedient that the *Jews* be blinded in their Malice, so that others after them may have a more perfect Sight in the Faith and true Belief

of thee, then not my Will but thine be fulfilled.

There was in Christ at this Time four Kinds of Wills, viz. The Will of the Flesh, which would no wise agree to suffer. The Will of Sensuality, and this murmur'd and fear'd. The Will of Reason, and this consented and was obedient. And lastly, There was in him his divine Will, which commandad and pass'd Sentence. And as he was true Man, as such he suffer'd great Anguish of Spirit, and underwent a most bitter Agony. Wherefore have an inward and cordial Compassion for him, and consider attentively every Action of the Lord thy God.

After this he came to his Disciples, and said to them: *Now sleep and take your Rest:* for their Eyes were very heavy.

Thus the good Shepherd was carefully watchful and vigilant over his little Flock his beloved Disciples. Oh how great was the Love of our sweet Lord and Saviour towards them, for those whom he loved, he loved to the End, so that even in his great Anguish and bitter Agony he was careful in procuring their Rest and quiet Repose.



C H A P. LXI.

*How our Lord Jesus Christ was taken
and betray'd by Judas.*

IMmediately after our blessed Lord beheld his Adversaries coming with burning Torches, and Lanthorns; and Weapons to apprehend him; and yet he would not awaken his Disciples till they came near to him. And then he spoke, and said: *Rise, let us go: Behold he approacheth that shall betray me*, Matt. xxvi. And while he was speaking, came that wicked Wretch Judas the Traitor, and approaching him, kiss'd him. For it is written, that it was the Manner and Custom of our Lord Jesus towards his Disciples, that when at any Time he had sent them out, at their returning again, he would receive them with a loving Kiss. Wherefore the Traitor went before the wicked Band, and kissed him as he was used to do, and said: *Hail Master*.

And here let us behold our Lord Jesus, how patiently and meekly he receives that false and treacherous Kiss, from that unfaithful Disciple, whose Feet so lately he had vouchsafed to wash with his own Hands, and whom, out of his unspeakable Charity he refused not to feed with the precious Food of his blessed Body. Consider likewise how meekly he suffered himself to be taken, bound, struck, and furiously dragg'd away, as if he had been a Thief, or the most wicked Person in the World, void of Power,

to help himself. Contemplate also the great Sorrow and inward Affliction he had for his Disciples, who fled and left him in the Hands of those ravenous Wolves. And on the other Side, consider the Grief of their Hearts, since the Cause of their leaving him was not the Perversity of their Will; but the Frailty of their weak Nature, for which they heartily mourn and sigh like poor Orphans, that know not what to do, or whither to go; and their Sorrow was so much the greater, as they knew in what a villainous Manner their Lord and Master would be treated and abused.

And incontinently those cruel Butchers drive and pull him along as they would a Beast to the Slaughter, and he like a meek Lamb not opening his Mouth, patiently follows them without Resistance. First those vile Wretches led him from the River *Cedron*, near which Place they apprehended him, towards the City of *Jerusalem*, and that with great Haste, Pain, and Violence, having his blessed Hands bound behind him as if he had been some grievous Malefactor, having his Garment torn from him, going bare headed, and stooping through the great Haste and violent Pain they forced him to, in going.

When he was brought before the chief Priests and Scribes that were then assembled together expecting his coming, they were rejoiced and glad that they had apprehended him: They then began to examin him, and to ask him many Questions, endeavouring to ensnare him; they procured false Witnesses against him, spit in his sacred Face, blinded his Eyes, buffeted and derided him, saying: *Tell us, who it was that struck thee?* Thus many and different

S

Ways

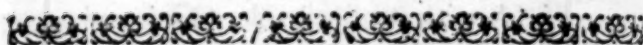
Ways they afflicted and tormented him, and in all he gave us most singular Examples of Patience.

At length the chief Judges rose up and departed, having order'd him to be kept in Custody under a Loft, in the Nature of a Prison, where they bound him to a Pillar of Stone, as those say who have seen it, leaving a Guard of armed Men with him for greater Security : who during the whole Night abused and derided him with many opprobrious and reproachful Speeches, saying : Dost thou believe thyself to be better or more wise than our learned Magistrates, or can you imagin that they understand not the Law and Religion much better than you ? How foolish dost thou appear in taking upon thee to reprehend and teach them, against whom thou shouldst not have presumed to open thy Lips ? Wherefore now your Wisdom appears, in being obliged to suffer that which all such as you truly deserve, you are truly worthy of Death, and it would be a pity that you should escape it. Thus the whole Night, sometimes one and sometimes another, both with scurrilous Language and wicked Works, continually reviled and abused him. And our blessed Lord with bashful and modest Countenance patiently bore it all, and was silent to every opprobrious Word they said against him, but with his Eyes modestly inclin'd towards the Ground made no Answer as if he had been guilty and worthy of Blame. Oh most aimable Lord, into whose Hands art thou come ? This is truly the Hour, and Power of Darkness, and with what Patience dost thou suffer it ?

Thus

Thus stood our blessed Redeemer bound to that Pillar till the next Morning. In the mean Time, *John*, who had follow'd him to the High Priest's House, went to the blessed Virgin, to *Mary Magdalen*, and other devout People who were at that Time assembled at *Mary Magdalen's* House (where our Lord made that memorable Supper the Night before) and related to them all that had happen'd to our Lord and his Disciples; which when they had heard they were seiz'd with unspeakable Grief and wept most bitterly. Consider them attentively and have compassion on them, for they are now in the greatest Grief and Affliction that ever they were in for their Lord, for they now plainly see and know full well that he will be taken from them and put to a cruel Death. Our blessed Lady retired alone to Prayer, and said: Oh most sovereign, most high, and most merciful Father, I present myself before thy Majesty to recommend to thy Protection my dearly beloved Son. Oh gracious Father, reveal to me whether my Son *Jesus* shall be put to Death or not. Be not severe to him, oh bountiful Father, who to all others art so good and merciful, since he knows no Sin, nor ever committed any Evil. Oh most just Father, if thou requirest his Death for the Redemption of the World, I beseech thee if possible to find out some other Means whereby to accomplish thy Design, and that my blessed Son's Life may be spared if it be thy holy Will, for all Things are possible to thee. And he out of Obedience to thee has abandon'd himself into the Hands of his Enemies, and will not attempt to deliver himself from their Power: Wherefore I beseech thee,

oh heavenly Father, to help him, and to deliver him to me again out of their wicked Hands. Thus, or in Words to this Effect, our blessed Lady pray'd for her Son in the profound Sorrow and Grief of her Soul, wherefore we ought to accompany her in Distress, and be moved to compassion towards her in this her so great Affliction.



C H A P. LXII.

How our blessed Lord was carried before Pilate, and of his being scourged at the Pillar, and crown'd wth Thorns.

EArly on the Morrow the Seniors and Chiefs of the People returned and caused *Jesus* to be bound, and led with his Hands fasten'd behind him: and thus hand-cuff'd, brought him to *Pilate*, mocking, reviling, and insulting him with the most abusive Taunts as he proceeded on the Way. Thus went this innocent Lamb, in the Guise of a Malefactor, hurried by the merciless Butchers to unmerited Slaughter. As he was going on his Way, his blessed Mother, *St. John*, and the holy Women who accompanied the Former, who had left their modest Retirement so early on Purpose to come to his Assistance and Comfort, met him at the Winding of a Street: And what Tongue can

express the bitter Anguish of their Souls at the sad Sight of their Lord thus hurried along by an insulting, abusive Mob? Or what Degree of inbred Grief can figure the Excess of mutual Sorrow this Interview begot on both Sides? Our Lord could not but suffer extremely thro' the Compassion he felt for his beloved Followers, and chiefly for his Mother. For he knew full well the Spasm they felt for him, sufficient to tear their bleeding Souls from their convulsed Bodies.

He was brought then before *Pilate*, and the Women follow'd at a Distance, the Throng of Rabble not suffering them to approach any nearer. Many Accusations were laid against him to *Pilate*, but *Pilate* finding all to be groundless, and desirous to rid himself of so odious a Prosecution dispatch'd him to *Herod*. *Herod* was exceedingly pleas'd at this, hoping by this Means to see a Miracle wrought by *Christ*: But he could not obtain the least Gratification of this Sort from *Christ*, who thought him unworthy even to hear a Word from his sacred Mouth. Hence *Herod* looking upon him as an Idiot, caused him to be cloath'd in a white Raiment, the usual Habit of Fools in those Days, and thus in Derision sent him back to *Pilate*. So that *Christ* patiently bore to be reputed both a Fool and a Malefactor by All, without deserving either from any. Contemplate him then as he is led backwards and forwards, with his Eyes modestly depress'd, hearing the Shouts and Taunts, receiving the Buffets, Spittings, and perhaps Filth thrown at him by a rude Populace, without Murmur or Complaint; cast a

pitying Eye upon him in this sad Plight, and with him compassionate his afflicted Mother too, and beloved Disciples, who follow him as closely as they may, for the Mob, till they reach to the Palace of *Pilate*. Here again by the savage Brutes he is loaded with false Accusations, which they utter with the utmost Impudence and Inveteracy. Yet *Pilate* finding in him nothing that bore the Appearance of Guilty, sought Means to free him from their Hands. Wherefore says he: *I will chasten and dismiss him.* O *Pilate*! dost thou presume to chastise thy Lord and Sovereign? Surely thou art beside thyself thus to dare to inflict Stripes on him who is as guiltless of Stripes as of Death. Oh, how much more wisely had you acted to chastise yourself by his Admonition. However, *Pilate* was besotted enough to order him to be most inhumanly scourged.

Wherefore by his Order our most innocent Lord was stript naked, and bound to a Pillar, and severely scourged. Thus was that innocent Lamb and most beautiful among the Children of Men shamefully exposed, naked, and abash'd, before the whole Populace; and received with invincible Patience the cruel Stripes of his barbarous Executioners. So that the most beautiful Flower of human Nature, and the fairest and most delicate of all Flesh was cover'd with Stripes, Wounds, and Bruises, insomuch that from the Crown of his Head to the Soal of his Foot, his most precious Blood ran, flowing from all Parts of his sacred Body, in great abundance upon the Ground, being so long scourged and beat, that they added Wound

to Wound, Bruise to Bruise, and Stripe to Stripe, till at length the inhuman Spectators being weary to behold any longer, what the cruel Butchers themselves were wholly tired of, he was order'd to be unbound. Wherefore he was loosed from the Pillar, on which the Stains of his precious Blood are still to be seen, as many authentic Historians affirm.

Here, pious Reader, let me entreat you to dwell some time on this Subject, and attentively consider, with Heart full of Sorrow and Compassion, the Extremity of his bitter Pains, and if you find not your Heart to be moved, or even to melt with Grief and Compunction at so great Sufferings of your blessed Lord, you may conclude that it is more hard and impenetrable than any Stone. 'Twas then fulfill'd of him, what the Prophet *Isaiab* had long before prophesied, saying: *We have seen him, and there was neither Form nor Beauty left, and we esteem'd him as a Leper and as one smitten by God and humbled.* Oh sweet *Jesus*, who dared to be so bold as to presume to strip thee of thy Garments? But who was it that dared with more Assurance to bind thee to the Pillar? and who most audacious of all could presume to beat and scourge thee in that cruel Manner? But thou oh most bright Son of Righteousness, thou, I say, didst withdraw the resplended Beams of thy Glory, and didst vouchsafe to abscond thy Power and Might, so that Darkness, and the Power of Darkness reigned for a Time, and thy Enemies appear'd by thy divine Permission more powerful than thyself. 'Twas the Excess of thy Love, and the Greatness of our Ini-

quity which disarm'd thee of thy Strength in this Conflict. But cursed be that Malice which caused thee to be thus cruelly tormented.

After this they led him round the Palace, to seek for his Cloaths which were scatter'd about in different Places of the House, some in one Part, and some in another, by those barbarous Executioners, who had stripp'd him. Here ought Tenderneſs to move us to Compaſſion towards him, thus afflicted and trembling with Cold: For as the Gospel tells us the Weather was ſharp and piercing. As he was clothing himſelf again, ſome of the wicked Populace went to *Pilate*, and ſaid: This Man ſaid he was King, wherefore let us cloath him after our Manner, and crown him as ſuch. Hence taking him aſide they cloathed him in a purple Garment, and plating a Crown of Thorns they put it upon his Head, and with Violence preſs'd them into his ſacred Temples; then giving him a Reed inſtead of a Scepter, they kneel'd down and and ſaluted him in Deriſion, ſaying: *Hail King of the Jews*: To all which *Jeſus* answer'd nothing, and like a meek and patient Lamb open'd not his Mouth. Here behold with melting Heart, how often they ſtrike him upon the Head with a Reed, to drive the piercing Thorns more deeply into his ſacred Temples; ſo that they forced the Blood from every Part, which running down in great abundance, cover'd his bleſſed Face. Conſider how he behaves in every Action, and how patiently he bears every Inſult which they offer to him; they deride and mock him as one who would make himſelf King, without Power to effect it.

Ha

He is cloathed in Purple, carries a Crown of Thorns on his Head, holds a Reed in his Hand, and they on their Knees, salute him in Derision as King, and he is silent, and murmurs not. But, oh miserable and wicked Wretches ye! how dreadful shall that blessed Head appear at the Last Day, which now you abuse and beat so inhumanly? Neither was all they had hitherto done sufficient to weaken their Malice against him, but to add more to his Reproach, they brought into the House many of the Mob to gaze on him, after which they led him out to *Pilate*, and shew'd him to the whole Multitude; having on, his purple Garment, his Crown of Thorns, and a Scepter of a Reed in his Hand. In this Manner stood that innocent Lamb, with his Eyes modestly depress'd before that great Multitude, who scoffed and derided him, and with the loudest Shouts exclaim'd against him, crying out to *Pilate*: *Crucify him, crucify him.*



C H A P. LXIII.

How our blessed Lord Jesus was condemn'd to suffer the cruel Death of the Cross, and compell'd to carry the same to Mount Calvary.

OUR blessed Lord Jesus having been many Ways shamefully reviled, mock'd, and abused; and suffer'd many cruel Torments among them, yet the Chief of the Jews continually, with great Instance, sought his Death, and stir'd up the whole Multitude to join with him, and to cry out to *Pilate* to have him crucified. At length the wicked Judge fearing more to incur their Displeasure than wrongfully to condemn the Innocent, pass'd Sentence of Death upon him. Then were the Scribes and Pharisees full of Joy that they had prosper'd in their Designs, and attain'd their wicked Ends against him. For then they remember'd not the Benefit they had received from him, nor the Miracles he had wrought among them for their Good; they neither pity'd him for his Innocence, nor were mov'd at the Cruelty and Baseness of the Action, they were going to commit, and instead of ceasing from their wicked Purpose in Consideration of the great Affliction, Sufferings and Reproaches they had inflicted upon him, they rejoiced and were glad that their Designs were now near the Execution. Wherefore they revile, mock, and insult him who is the true and eternal God, and hasten

as far as possible his Death. Hence he is again carried back into the House, stript of his purple Garment and left thus naked before them. Stop here a Moment, and attentively consider the Make and Form of his sacred Body. And that you may be moved to inward Compassion towards him, and feed your Soul with devout Contemplation, close your Eyes for a Moment to his Divinity, and consider him as pure Man, and you will behold the most lovely, fair, innocent, and beautiful among the Sons of Men in that doleful Condition, full of Wounds and Bruises, cover'd with Blood, naked and abash'd, seeking and gathering together his Garments, which were dispersed in different Parts of the House, by those cruel and merciless Brutes, and cloathing himself likewise before them, who stood insulting and reviling him, as if he had been the most contemptible of all Creatures, forsaken by God, and destitute of all Help and Comfort. Then consider the profound and wonderful Meekness of him as God and Man, behold how that immense, eternal, and incomprehensible Majesty stoops to the Ground, collects his Garments and bashfully cloaths himself before his Enemies, as tho' he were the vilest of Men, their bought Slave, under their Dominion, and by them chastised as a base and unpardonable Delinquent. After this accompany him out, and behold how, after he has put on his Cloaths, they hurry him away, and load him with the heavy Wood of the Cross, which, as Historians say, was fifteen Feet in Length, this the most meek and innocent Lamb took and bore upon his blessed Shoulders: Thus was he hurried along by
an

an enraged Mob, in Company with two Thieves that were condemn'd to Death, these were his Companions in suffering. Oh sweet and beloved *Jesus*, how much do these thy false Friends abase thee, by making thee a Companion with Thieves, and what is still worse, they compel thee to carry thy own Cross, which is a Burden they imposed not upon them. Wherefore, as the Prophet *Isaiab* saith, *You are not only number'd with evil Doers, but are used worse than they.* Thy Patience, Oh Lord is unspeakable.

And now, devout Christian, with all possible Attention and Devotion, observe our Lord *Jesus* how he bends under the Weight of the Cross, vehemently sighing, and wearied. Take Pity on him in this sad Plight of renew'd Afflictions and Calumnies.

His blessed and afflicted Mother seeing that she could not approach near him for the great Concourse of People which pressed about him, went, with St. *John* and the rest of her Companions, a nearer Way, to the End that she might meet him at the Winding of the Street. And when she perceived him coming, over-loaded with the heavy Tree of the Cross, which before she had not seen, she was like one beside herself, and half dead with Sorrow, so that she could neither speak to him, nor he to her, by Reason of the furious Mob which hurried him along with great Violence and Compulsion. After however that he had gone a little Way, he turned back to the Women that followed weeping, and said: *Ye Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your Children,* &c. as is farther contain'd in
the

the Gospel. And in these two Places were erected two Churches in Memory of these Things, as they report who have been there and seen them. And as *Mount Calvary* was far distant from the City, he was so tir'd and faint that he was not able to carry his Cross the whole Way, but fell down under it with Weariness. Wherefore the wicked Executioners not willing to defer his Death, and fearing lest *Pilate* should revoke his Sentence, as he had before shewn a kind of Inclination to release him : They therefore compell'd one *Simon* a Stranger to carry it for him, and *Jesus* they led unburden'd, but bound like a Thief, to the Place of Execution.

Now if we attentively consider all that hath been done to our Lord *Jesus*, and the many Things he hath suffer'd from the Time he was first apprehended to this present, we shall doubtless find therein great Matter of Sorrow and Compunction. For we may truly believe that from the Hour in which he was first taken in the Night, till the Time of his being crucified, he was in one continual Combate, and endured many Reproaches, many Injuries, many Sorrows and Detractions, and suffer'd many cruel Torments among them. For there was no manner of Rest given him but continual Trouble and Vexation. And here may you dwell, devout Reader, for some short Space of Time, and take a short Review of that which hitherto hath been acted against him ; *First*, How one lays violent Hands upon him and apprehends him, another binds him straitly with Cords, another blasphemeth him, another spits in his sacred Face ; another proposeth to him subtle
Quest.

Questions in order to ensnare him, another produceth false Witness against him, another drags him backwards and forwards from one Judge to another, another blindfolds his Eyes, another buffets him, another strips him of his Cloaths, another binds him to a Pillar, another most cruelly scourgeth him, another unbinds him and cloaths him in a purple Garment, another platteth a Crown of Thorns upon his Head; another puts a Reed into his Hand, another takes it from him, and striking him with it upon the Head, drives the Thorns into his sacred Temples, another kneeleth down before him and mocketh him, and so of the rest, sometimes one and sometimes another. Now they lead him to *Annas*, now to *Caiphas*, then to *Pilate*, and from thence to *Herod*, now hither, and now thither, now out, and then in again. And finally to conclude, he was dragged and hurried along with great Violence and without Rest till he came to *Mount Calvary*, which was the Place fixed for the Period of this doleful Combate.



C H A P. LXIV.

*Of the Nailing of our Lord Jesus Christ
to the Cross.*

WHEN our blessed Lord *Jesus* was now come to *Mount Calvary*, those wicked and merciless Butchers began then to effect their cruel Work. Be present now with all the Attention of your Mind to these Things, and devoutly consider every Particular relating to the Lord your God. Behold with the interior Eyes of your Soul, some preparing the Cross, some making ready the Ropes and Cords to bind him, some the Nails and Hammers to fasten him, others preparing the Ladder and other Instruments, some digging the Hole in the Earth to fix the Cross in, and others busy in stripping him, so that this is the third Time of his being stripp'd, by which his Wounds are again renew'd by the violent tearing off his Cloaths which were cleav'd to his sacred Flesh. His blessed Mother when she beheld him thus used was afflicted beyond Expression. And oh how full of bitter Anguish indeed may we well imagin was her tender Soul, in beholding her beloved and innocent Son thus shamefully abused, and loaded with Injuries and Insults? Then was he extended upon the Cross, as it lay upon the Ground, and with Cords stretching forth with Violence his sacred Hands and Feet, the cruel Slaughterers with long iron Nails barbarously piercing them nail'd him fast to it.

Thus

Thus was our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ* fastened to the Cross Hand and Foot, and so extremely strain'd thereon, that as the Royal Prophet saith ; *All his Bones might be number'd* : And his sacred Blood ran forth in Streams from his blessed Wounds in great Abundance : And his Arms and Legs were so wide stretch'd with the Nails, that he could not move any Part of his Body, except his Head. And as his whole Body was supported only by three Nails, undoubtedly his Pains were great beyond what any Heart can conceive or Tongue express. But to add still Reproach to his Grief, he was crucified between two Thieves, and suffer'd Insults, Contempt, and Revilings from all Parts. Wherefore one blasphemes him, others shook their Heads, and said : *Vah, fye on thee*, thou art he that wouldst destroy the Temple of God, and build it up again in three Days. Some said : *Others he sav'd, himself he cannot save* ; and if thou be the Son of God descend now from the Cross that we may believe. And those who crucified him divided his Garment among them before his Face. All this was acted in the Presence of his afflicted Mother who stood under the Cross, whose tender Compassion and Tears added much to the Sorrow and Affliction of her Son. For she accompanied him in her Soul on the Cross, and inwardly desir'd rather to die with him, than to live any longer without him. Thus stood the doleful Mother beside the Cross of her Son : She never turned her Eyes from him, she was afflicted and full of Anguish with him ; and with many bitter Sighs pray'd to her heavenly Father saying : Oh heavenly Father and sovereign Lord

Lord of Majesty, without doubt it was foreseen and pleasing to thee from all Eternity, that my most beloved and innocent Son should shed his precious Blood, and be crucified for the Sins of the World, wherefore it is not convenient to ask him of you again. But most holy Father, thou seest the bitter Torment and present Anguish of his Soul, wherefore I beseech thee, ease him of his Pain, and release him if it be thy heavenly Will.

And her blessed Son pray'd secretly to his Father for her, saying : Oh good Father, look down, I beseech thee, on my afflicted Mother, and behold how deeply she is tormented for me ; my being crucified is sufficient for the Sins of Mankind, she hath not deserved any such Thing, and yet she is with me in Heart upon the Cross, and she bears an equal Share with me in my Pains. Wherefore I recommend her to thee, beseeching thee that it would please thee to assuage and lessen her Grief.

There was also with our blessed Lady the beloved Disciple St. *John*, and *Mary Magdalen*, and the two Sisters of our Lady, *Mary of James*, and *Mary of Salome*, and other of his Friends standing under the Cross, who all, but especially *Mary Magdalen* the beloved of *Jesus*, were very sorrowful and wept bitterly, and could noways be comforted because of the Pains of their beloved Master. For their Sorrow was often renewed with his, either in these Words, or Deeds, which were said, or done to him.

C H A P. LXV.

Of the Words which our Lord spoke hanging upon the Cross, and of his yielding up his Spirit.

OUR Lord Jesus hanging on the Cross, ceased not to do, and to speak those Things which were for our Advantage, even to the last Moment in which he gave up his Spirit. Wherefore he spoke seven Times, as is written in the Gospel.

The first Thing he said was when he pray'd for his Enemies, saying : *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do* : Oh wonderful Patience, Charity, and Benignity.

The Second was to his Mother, when he said : *Woman, behold thy Son* ; and to John, *Behold thy Mother*. He would not call her at that Time Mother, lest the Tendernefs of the Expression should have occasioned her more Grief.

The Third was to the good Thief, saying : *This Day thou shalt be with me in Paradise*. In which Words he shew'd his infinite and unbounded Mercy towards us.

The Fourth was when he said : *Eloi, Eloi, Lamafabathani* ; that is to say, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me* ? As if he had said more plainly thus : *My God thou hast so much loved the World, that while you give me to Death for its Redemption, you seem to have forsaken me*.

The

JESUS CHRIST.

291

The Fifth was *Sitio*: *I thirst*. Which Word gave Occasion to his Enemies to rejoice, and to his Mother greater Occasion of Compassion. And although this Word may be understood of his Thirst for the Salvation of Souls; yet he truly thirsted for Drink; for by the great Effusion of his Blood, he had little Moisture left within him. Wherefore his cruel Butchers who was studying how they might torment him, took Vinegar mix'd with Gall and put it to his Mouth that he might drink.

The sixth was when he said: *Consummatum est*: *It is finished*. As if he had said: Oh, Father, I have perfectly and obediently fulfill'd all the Commands you gave me, and all that has hitherto been writ of me. wherefore now if it please thee receive me again to thyself. To which, we may for Devotion's Sake imagine, his Father replied: Come my beloved Son, for thou hast fulfilled all Things compleatly, and I will not that you suffer any more, come then and resign thy Soul into my Arms, and repose thyself for ever in my Bosom.

And then our blessed Jesus began to fail in his Sight, after the Nature of dying Men, and and grew faint and languishing, sometimes closing and sometimes opening his Eyes, and bowing his Head, first on one Side, and then on the other, till being quite spent, and his Strength failing, he recommended his Soul to his Father, crying out with a loud Voice, and pronouncing the seventh Word, saying: *Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit*; with which he yielded up the Ghost.

T 2

At

At this strong and vehement Cry of our Lord *Jesus*, a Centurion who was standing by was converted, and immediately said: *Verily, this Man is the Son of God*; because he heard him cry so loud when he expir'd.

Oh in what a sad and sorrowful Condition may we well suppose, was the tender Heart of his blessed Mother when she beheld him to languish in so painful a Manner, to cry out and to die in her Presence? We may easily believe that her Spirits fail'd her, and that she was ready to give up the Ghost with him, much more than when she met him carrying his Cross. And what can we think of *Mary Magdalen*, of *St. John* his beloved Disciple, and of the other two Sisters of our Lady? Undoubtedly they were brimful of inexpressible Sorrow, loaded with Grief, and overwhelm'd with Bitterness and Tears without any kind of Comfort, and not knowing what to do.

Behold now our Lord *Jesus* hangeth dead upon the Cross, and the Multitude of People return again to the City, but the most afflicted Mother, with the other four, remain still at the Cross, feeding their Souls with the divine Contemplation of their Beloved, and wait for Help from God, that they might have him taken from the Cross and bury him.

If you also, Christian Soul, will behold your Lord, in devout Contemplation, you cannot chuse but conceive a tender Compassion, seeing that from the Crown of his Head to the Soal of his Foot there was no whole Part left in him; there was not a Member, or any Sense which had not their extreme Pain and Affliction.

Employ

Employ thyself then in the daily Study of these Sufferings of thy Lord, and make them the frequent Subject of your devout Meditation.



C H A P. LXVI.

*Of the opening of our blessed Saviour's
Side with a Spear.*

WHILE the blessed Mother of our Lord Jesus, with St. John, St. Mary Magdalen, and the two Sisters of our blessed Lady sat beside the Cross with her Eyes attentively fixed on her beloved Son, contemplating him thus hanging dead between two Thieves, forsaken and abandoned: There came many Men from the City towards them; being sent to break the Legs of those who were crucified, and to kill them downright if they were not dead, that their Bodies might not be seen hanging on the Cross upon the *Sabbath-Day*. Our blessed Lady with the rest rose up to behold, and saw them coming, but knew not for what Reason: Wherefore their Sorrow was renewed, and their Fear encreased more as they saw them advance nearer. His blessed Mother being more sensibly affected than the rest, and not knowing what to do, turn'd herself towards her beloved Son and said: My most dear Son to what end, I beseech thee, do these cruel Butchers return
T 3 hither

hither again? What more do they intend to do, have they not already taken away thy Life? I was in Hopes that they were satisfied with what they had done before to thee while thou wast living: But now it seemeth that they have not yet done with thee, but they will farther pursue thee dead. I know not, my beloved Son, how to act since I am as unable of helping thee now, as I was before in delivering thee from Death. I will approach however and stand near the Cross at thy blessed Feet, and beseech thy heavenly Father to render them favourable towards thee?

Hence they all five, bitterly weeping, went and placed themselves before the Cross of our Lord *Jesus*. And the Multitude hastily advancing came with great Shouts and Noise, and seeing that the two Thieves were yet living, with great Rage they broke their Legs and killed them, and taking them down cast them into a Ditch. And then returning, they came to our Lord *Jesus*. And his blessed Mother, pierced to the Heart with Grief, fearing lest they might do the same to him, had Recourse to her usual Weapon of Humility: Wherefore kneeling down before them with her Arms extended, and with a loud and compassionate Voice spoke to them in this Manner: I beseech you, Brethren, for the Love of God most High and Almighty, that you will no more afflict or torment me in my most dear Son, I am truly his most sorrowful and disconsolate Mother, whom you know has never injur'd or offended you. And if my beloved Son seemed to oppose you, you have put him to Death for it. What more can your Revenge require? Forbear then to in-

fult

sult him any longer, and I will compound for, and forgive you what Injuries you have hitherto done me in his Death and Sufferings. But, Oh be thus far merciful in your Cruelty: Break not his dear his precious Corse, but suffer me to carry it whole to the Sepulchre. What will it avail to break his Limbs, who has already expir'd this Hour past? Thus did the sacred Virgin persist on her Knees, with *John* and *Magdalen*, and the other devout Women, weeping, and entreating those inhuman Butchers. O sacred Lady, to what Purpose dost thou thus demean thyself to these flagitious Wretches? Can you hope for any Success with such inexorable Savages? Will Pity make the Impious relent, will the Merciless give Yearnings of Mercy, or Pride truckle to Humility? Alas! your Endeavours are ineffectual: Condescension is the Aversion of the Proud.

One *Longinus* by Name, at that Time a wicked, haughty Man, but afterwards a Convert, a Saint, nay, a Martyr, stretched forth his Lance, and seeming to give Ear to their Cries pierced our Lord's sacred Side, when immediately from his wide Wound gush'd forth Water and Blood. At this Sight his disconsolate Mother fell into a Swoon in the Arms of the *Magdalen*: And while *St. John* and the holy Women were bustled in supporting and bringing to herself our blessed Lady, the impious Butchers departed. And now at her Recovery a new Taste of Death succeeded the former, when she beheld her beloved, divine Son hanging dead on the Cross in so mangled and deplorable a Condition. Oh! how many Strokes of Deaths did not this spotless Lady feel on this

Day? Who can doubt of their being equal in Number to the Insults and Cruelties used to him, And thus was fulfilled what *Simeon* foretold, That *the Sword of Sorrow should pierce her Soul*. Thus did one Lance with the same sacrilegious Stroke rip open the blessed Body of *Jesus*, and the sacred Soul of *Mary*.

When our blessed Lady was perfectly recover'd they all sat down at the Feet of the Cross at a Loss what or how to do. How to take down and where to deposit the holy Corse they could not contrive, for want of Strength, and for want of a Sepulchre to put it in. To depart and leave him on the Cross in that Condition, they knew not how to resolve, and to remain there long was neither decent nor safe, for Night was coming on. What Perplexity! O bountiful God, how didst thou suffer this thy Favourite, this Mirror of all Virtues, this our sacred Advocate and Protectress to be afflicted! Surely it were Time she had some Respite from the Excess of Anguish.



C H A P. LXVII.

Of the Taking down our Lord from the Cross.

A GAIN they saw several Persons coming along the Road: These were *Joseph of Arimathea*, and *Nicodemus*, and some Persons with them, who brought Instruments to take down the sacred Body from the Cross, and a great Quantity of Myrrh and Aloes to embalm it. This gave them a new Alarm, not knowing at a Distance but they might be Persons coming to offer new Outrages to the blessed Corse. Wherefore they all arose immediately and falling on their Knees applied themselves to Prayer, beseeching God to avert the Affliction they seemed again threaten'd with. At length however *St. John* discover'd who they were, and returning Thanks to God, they all began to be comforted. Our blessed Lady then dispatch'd *St. John* immediately to meet them, who brought them to the Cross where the holy Women were, and presented them to the afflicted Mother of God. Our blessed Lady received them graciously, and with all the Joy compatible with her present State of Grief: *Joseph* and *Nicodemus* condoled with her and the pious Company: Then all falling on their Knees adored the sacred Relict of our Lord, and after some Time spent in devout and humble Prayer,
and

and religious Homage, they all again arose and prepared to take him down from the Cross.

*The Man-
ner of ta-
king Christ
from the
Cross.*

While the holy Company are busied in their devout Offices to *Christ*, endeavour, pious Reader, to be as devoutly attentive to all that passes. Two Ladders then are fixed to the Cross, one to each Arm. *Joseph*, while *Nicodemus* goes up that on the left Hand, ascends the other on the Right, and labours to draw the Nail with which that Hand is fasten'd. This was done not without a great deal of Difficulty, and bruising the divine Flesh, for the Nails were of an immoderate Grossness. However the Action was acceptable to God, inasmuch as it was a necessitated Violence, and practised only thro' the utmost Purity of Intention and Liveliness of Faith. When *Joseph* had drawn out the Nail, St. *John* made a Sign to him to give it to him with Privacy, which, when he received it he hid it in his Bosom that the afflicted Virgin might not see it. Then *Nicodemus* extracted the Nail from the left Hand and gave it likewise to St. *John*, who joined it devoutly with the former. When the Nails were thus drawn from the Hands of our blessed Redeemer, *Nicodemus* descended to draw out that which fastened his heavenly Feet, while *Joseph* supported the Body. O thrice happy *Joseph*, who was deem'd worthy to embrace so divine, so inestimable a Treasure! While *Joseph* held the sacred Body leaning on his Arms, our blessed Lady took hold of the blessed Hand which hung down, and pressing it reverently and tenderly to her holy Face and Lips, kiss'd it, press'd it, and devoutly bath'd it with her motherly, virgin Tears. Oh Nature, what a Spec-

Spectacle! O human Heart, what must thou be not to melt at such a Sight? When the Nail was extracted from the Feet, *Joseph* descended by Degrees, while the others received the heavenly Body of our Lord, and reposed it decently on the Ground. Our blessed Lady then raised the holy Head and Shoulders and placed them on her Lap, and the *Magdalen* prostrating herself embraced his sacred Feet, whence she had once received such a plentitude of Grace. All the Rest stood round joining their Sighs and Tears, and bitterly bemoaning the only begotten of God thus disfigur'd by base ungrateful Man.



C H A P. LXVIII.

Of the Embalming and Burial of our Lord.

AFTER a short Space, as Night was drawing on, *Joseph* besought our Lady to permit him to embalm and wrap up the sacred Body in the fine Linnen he had brought with him for that Purpose. But she knew not how to part with the dear Treasure so soon again. I intreat you, my Friends, said she, rob me not so soon of my dear, my only Son, of all that is dear to me in this Life; rather if you are in haste to bury him lay me in the Sepulchre by him. Oh that I might, dearest *Jesus*, lay by thee and never be separated from thee. Tears flow'd swiftly down her Virgin Cheeks; and Sighs forbid her Words an Utterance. Silent and sad she view'd the lovely, mangled Form; now she examined, one by one the reeking Wounds still fresh and full of clodded Blood; now she pick'd out with Care and cruel Anguish, one after one the long and splinter'd Thorns still buried in his Temples; now she beheld his Head, and now his Face, composing the few straggling Hairs which blinded Inhumanity had left upon his Head and Beard; and washing off the Dirt and Spittle from his divine Countenance with Floods of Tears; unsatiated with weeping, sighing, and gazing on the Object of her Anguish. Thus fix'd and immoveable the afflicted Mother dwelt with her Eyes

on the beloved, lovely Form of her divine Son, and was not to be removed from him, till St. *John* with Reverence approaching intreated her to consider the Lateness of the Day, and to consent that *Joseph* and *Nicodemus* might do their pious Offices in Time, to prevent any Insults or Calumnies of the *Jews*. To this Remonstrance the wise and humble Virgin yielded, remembering well that her dearest *Jesus* had recommended her to the Care of this faithful, loving Disciple. And therefore without contending, she gave them her Blessing, and Permission to dress and wrap him up. St. *John* then with *Joseph* and *Nicodemus* immediately embalm'd the holy Body, and wrapt it in the fine linnen Cloth. While they were busied about the Body, the blessed Virgin still kept the Head upon her Lap, and the *Magdalen* was still officious about his Feet. Here knel'd the illustrious Penitent almost dissolv'd with Excess of Grief, and now on those sacred Limbs which Compunction elsewhere bath'd with her Tears, unspeakable Grief and tender Compassion made her pour a double Flood. She beheld those dear Feet cruelly pierced and torn, mangled and bloody, but could not behold them clearly for the Bitterness of her weeping. The Evangelist bears Witness that she loved exceedingly, and therefore who can be amazed that she should grieve exceedingly to see our Lord, whom she thus loved, and to see him thus mangled, dead, and reduced almost to nothing? Scarce could her Breast contain her Heart thus big with panting Anguish: Nor is it improbable that, if she might she would have gladly expir'd at these Feet of her expir'd Lord. This was the ninth and last Office

see she could pay her divine Master, and in doing this how bitterly was she stung with Affliction that she could not do it in the Manner she wished. She would fain have laid out the blessed Body, anointed, and wrapt it wholly of herself with that Decency and Reverence due to it. But neither the Time nor the Place would permit it; more then she could not do, nor in a better Manner than to bathe his venerable Plants with her Tears, dry them with her Locks, kiss them, and reverently wrap them in the Linnen: This she did, and did it with a Diligence equal to her Affection.

When thus the Body and Feet of our divine Saviour were wrapt up, they all turn'd their Looks towards our blessed Lady to learn her Pleasure, and share her parting Grief. And she finding there was now no more time to delay, threw her Face on that her heavenly Son. Oh precious Son *Jesus*! do I still hold you dead on my Lap? And must I? must I then part from you? O cruel, unspeakable cruel Divorce of Death. Sweet and delightful was our Converse with each other, and free from Injury or Offence to any, why then do I see thee, sweet Offspring of my Bowels, thus mangled and murdered like a publick Nuisance? How faithfully, how dutifully, how tenderly did you when alive wait on and cherish me; yet what Return was I able to make you in this dreadful Conflict? Your heavenly Father was able alone to assist you; I could not, and he for his ineffably divine Reasons would not. Blessed be his holy Name alike for all he has done. But why my only Joy did you abandon yourself? Ah! it was for the generous Love of Mankind whom you came to redeem.

deem. Alas! how dear has this Redemption cost you? Yet dear as it has been, as it redounds to your Glory and their Salvation, I submit to, may, rejoice in it. And if I do grieve, forgive me, all-bounteous *Jesus*, forgive me these Tears and Sighs which surely are but due from so beloved a Parent to so lovely, loving, and divine a Son. How can I refrain from Tears when I behold to what a deplorable condition the Sins of Man have brought you, you had neither Sin nor Harm in you. Now ah! now our social Converse with each other is broken off, now I part from you, my only Solace. Well, since it is your Will it shall be mine; and these Hands in Obedience to your divine Pleasure shall bury your sacred Body. And then whither or to whom shall I your most afflicted Mother fly for Protection and Refuge? How shall I live without you? Oh that I might be buried with you! Oh that one Tomb might contain us both, that we might never be separated in Body any more than in Mind! Go then, lovely *Jesus*! Go to your Sepulchre, and since my Body may not be there entomb'd with yours, my Soul shall still accompany you thither, and there for ever dwell with you. To you then I offer and recommend it. Oh Son, oh dearest, oh divine Son, how hard is this Separation! A Flood of Tears followed her Words and bathed the sacred Face of *Christ* more plentifully than the *Magdalen* had bathed his Feet. She wiped them off however, and kissing his Lips and Eyes wrapt up the holy Head in the Linnen. After which all again falling on the Ground, and paying their Adorations, took the sacred Body and bore it to the Monument;

ment; our blessed Lady holding up the Head, St. Mary Magdalen the Feet, and the rest of them the Body.

Near the Place where our Saviour was crucified, was a Sepulchre in which they buried our Lord with Reverence, Tears, Sighs, and Adorations. After he was laid in the Monument, the afflicted Mother embraced him, and clung to him for a while; but St. John and the holy Women raised her and rolled a huge Stone against the Entrance in the Monument. Venerable Beda tells us, that this Monument was a kind of round Mansion, hewn out of a Rock beneath, so high that a Man could not reach, with his Arm perpendicularly raised, to the Roof of it. Its Entrance stood Eastward: And in it our Lord's Body was placed in a Tomb, on the North Side, of seven Feet long.



C H A P. LXIX.

Of our blessed Lady's Departure from the Sepulchre and Return to Mount Sion.

WHEN *Joseph* had compleated his Office of burying our Saviour, and was upon the Point of returning to *Jerusalem*, he came to the blessed Virgin and intreated her with many Solicitations to retire to his House with the Companions and Sharers in her Grief, offering it and all he was Master of in it to her Service and Command. But our blessed Lady graciously returning him Thanks, excused herself from going thither, for that she was committed by her beloved Son to the Care of his beloved Disciple *John*. Who, when *Joseph* turn'd to him to beseech him to prevail upon her to honour his House with her sacred Presence, told them, that he must lead her immediately to *Mount Sion*, the Place where *Jesus* had but the Night before supp'd with his Disciples, and where he himself proposed to remain with her. Upon which they forthwith adored at the Sepulchre, and after paying their Submission to the holy Virgin, and their Respects to her Company, they went their Way: But our blessed Lady, *St. John*, and the devout Women remain'd a while longer over-against the Sepulchre.

At length *St. John* remonstrating to our blessed Lady that it was neither safe to remain there late at Night, nor decent to enter the City much later in the Day, she humbly arose, and kneeling:

U

ing:

ing before the Sepulchre embraced it, saying : Farewell my dearest, best beloved Son ; since I may not, must not stay no longer near thee, I recommend thee to thy eternal Father's all-wise and mighty Care ; then lifting her Eyes to Heaven with abundance of Tears, and Heart full of Love and Grief, To you, O eternal Father, I recommend this dear Deposit of your and my only begotten Son. Oh take under your Protection, and guard from every Insult his precious Body, and with it accept my Soul which I here leave together with it. Then rising she departed with her Companions from the Monument.

When they came again to the Cross, she kneel'd down and adored, saying : Here died my dear, my precious Son ; here he poured out the generous Sea of Blood for Man's Redemption : And after her Example, all did the same. Nor is it without good Grounds that we may believe our blessed Lady to have been the first Reverer of the Cross. When they drew nigh to the City, the Women veil'd her like a Widow and walked distressful and afflicted before her, and she proceeded after them with her Head and Face quite cover'd, between *St. John* and *St. Mary Magdalen*. At their Entrance into Town a pious Contention arose between these Two, the *Magdalen* pleading hard that our blessed Lady might come to reside at her House, alledging the Goodness with which our Lord had honour'd her in his Life-time in frequently resorting to it. But *St. John*, on the other Hand, was desirous of leading the sacred Virgin to *Mount Sion*, where he said she would be safer, and more within the Reach of all their Friends. Accordingly our blessed Lady deter-

min'd

min'd to go thither, and the *Magdalen* follow'd her. As they pass'd along the Town many devout Persons of both Sexes met her and condoled with her, crying out aloud against the opprobrious Injustice done to her divine Son, as they led her on to the House whither she was repairing. When she arrived at the Place where she was to remain, turning to her Attendants, she returned them Thanks, and they submissively bowing, paid her Homage and Condolance. Our Lady was follow'd by her two Sisters and the *Magdalen* into the House; after which St. *John* placing himself at the Door, and returning Thanks to the rest, and making some Excuses for not inviting them in on Account of the Lateness of the Evening, and the melancholly Situation of the afflicted Virgin, he dismissed them. But with disconsolate Eyes did this childless Mother look round the House, where she could no more see the Object of all her Delight. Oh fair, and beauteous, O lovely Son! where art thou now? O *John*! where is my only Son? O *Magdalen*! where is thy Master, that more than Parent who loved thee so tenderly? O beloved Sisters! where is my *Jesus*? Every Joy is now fled from me; every Sweetness, every pleasing Sight vanishes from my Eyes, now he is no more before me. Alas, alas, what Agonies he suffer'd! Alas, how my Grief augments when ever I look back to behold him all torn, all bruised, all disfigured, sighing, panting, and fainting with Thirst, Anguish, and Violence! What Insults, what Torments, and what Taunts did he go through! And I, oh me! wish'd and wish'd in vain to comfort him. His Foes inhumanly abused him,

his Friends meanly and shamefully forsook him, his poor his tender Mother wanted Power to help him, and his Father, his Almighty Father would not rescue him : And with what Expedition was he not hurried to the cruel, inhumanly cruel, unnaturally cruel Slaughter ? What Wretch so vile was ever condemn'd, and executed with so much Injustice, Barbarity and Precipitation as my poor innocent inoffensive Son *Jesus* ? O my Son *Jesus* ! in this last one unhappiest of Nights wast thou basely betray'd, inhumanly seiz'd, perfidiously condemn'd, and now cruelly crucified, thou liest unjustly murder'd. O dearest *Jesus* ! how bitter is this Separation from thee, and how insupportable the sad Reflection on thy undeserved ignominious Death ! Thus went on this tender, this afflicted Mother, till St. *John* at length besought her to desist from her Excess of Grief, and administer'd Comfort to her. Do you amidst your pious Contemplation wish to do the like, devout Reader, obey her, minister to her, and attend and comfort her, and join with St. *John* in preparing something for her Refection and for those who are with her, who are all fasting and faint : And when you have indulged yourself a while in this pious, spiritual Officioufness, procure the sacred Virgin's Blessing and depart.

C H A P. LXX.

Meditation on our blessed Lady's Conversation with her devout Companions.

ON the Morning of the Sabbath, they all remain'd in the House with the Doors shut extremely afflicted, and mourning like Orphans for the Loss of a tender Parent, without uttering a Syllable, but looking dejectedly one on another, as is usual on Occasions of extreme Grief, and supply their Want of Words with abundant Sighs. While thus they sit distressful a sudden Knocking at the Door alarms and dismays them, for all Courage is flown from them. But *John* going to the Door finds it to be *Peter*, and removing the Fears of the Company by acquainting them with it. *Peter* with the sacred Virgin's Leave being admitted full of Confusion, Anguish, and Repentance approaches, but without being able to utter a Word. After him came one by one the rest of the Disciples, weeping and abashed. At length, when their Tears and Sighs are abated, they begin to talk of their dear, deceased Lord. O how I blush from my Soul, says *Peter*, and how well my confused Conscience tells me that I am unworthy to speak in your Presence, sacred Lady, or even to be seen by Mankind, after having so shamefully denied and forsaken my divine Master who loved me to so great a Degree! In like Manner all the other Disciples, with Tears, knocking their Breasts, and deep Sorrow, accu-

fed themselves for having abandoned their Lord in his Passion. But the gracious Virgin Mother consoled them all, saying. Alas, my Children, your and my bountiful Master and faithful Shepherd has now departed from us for a while, and left us like Orphans without a Parent. However, I finally trust to his Goodness, that he will soon be with us again. And you know how good and indulgent he is, and how much he loves you all. Despair not then, but confidently rely on his Goodness for your Reconciliation, and depend on his Pardon for every Fault and Offence you have hitherto committed against him. For he knows full well the Frailty of your Natures, and the Greatness of the Temptation. By his Almighty Father's Permission such was the Fury, and Outrage of his mischievous Enemies, that your staying with him could not have been of Service to him: Therefore be not discouraged. Truly, O benign Lady, says *Peter*, thus far what you say I hope will in some Measure alleviate my Offence: It was the very Fury you speak of which so terrified me, as to make me think myself in Danger of falling a Victim to it and that Terror it was which made me so shamefully deny my Lord. Nor did I at the Instant reflect on the Word by which he foretold this Denial. The *Magdalen* then enquiring concerning this Prediction of our Lord, *Peter* told her the Circumstances of it, and added, that our Lord had told them many Things at his Last Supper. Upon which our blessed Lady desiring to be informed of all the Particulars of what her divine Son had done and said on that Occasion, *Peter* made a Sign to *John*, and *John* related

related the whole Particulars. And then as well concerning this as other Occasions, they related among themselves, sometimes one and sometimes another, several Things which *Christ* had taught and practised amongst them : And thus they pass'd the whole Day in talking of him. O how attentively did the *Magdalen*, and much more our blessed Lady listen to all this. O how often did she in that Day cry out, Blessed for ever be my holy Son *Jesus* ! Behold then diligently and compassionate them in the extreme Affliction which this Day overwhelms them.

For what a Sight was it to behold the Queen of Heaven and Earth, the Princes of the holy Church, and the Directors of *Christ*'s People seized with so great Sorrow and forced to abscond themselves in that little House, not knowing what to do, having nothing to comfort them but only to communicate together and repeat the former Sayings and Actions of their divine Lord and Master *Jesus*. Our blessed Lady however remained with a peaceful and serene Mind, being always firm and constant in the certain Hopes of her Son's Resurrection ; in which Hopes she persisted the whole Sabbath ; for which Reason the Sabbath is a Day specially dedicated by the Church to her. Her Comfort however was not wholly free from Grief whenever she thought on the bitter Death and sufferings of her blessed Son.

Now when the Sun was gone down, and it was lawful for them to work, *Mary Magdalen* and the other *Mary* that was with her, went out to buy certain sweet Spices to make Ointments to anoint the Body. For the Night before, after they came from the Sepulchre, they began to make Things ready for it till Sun-set,

after which Time they were silent ; for according to the Law they were oblig'd to keep the Sabbath from Sun-set the Evening before, till the Setting of the same on the Sabbath Evening. Behold them now how they go with sorrowful and mournful Countenance, and apply to some devout good Man for the Spices they had occasion for ; and he tenderly compassionating their Affliction willingly supplied them. Wherefore chusing the best Spices they could find, they return'd home again, and applied themselves to compound a precious Ointment after the best Manner they were capable. Cast an Eye towards them and behold how they labour for our Lord *Jesus*, weeping, sighing, and sorrowful : Our blessed Lady and the Apostles stood looking on them, and undoubtedly, when needful, lent a helping Hand ; which done, and Night being come, they ceased and retired to Repose, which we may piously imagin was very little.



C H A P. LXXI.

How our Lord Jesus descended into the Limbo of the Fathers.

WE are now to consider what our blessed Lord did on this Day of the Sabbath. You are to know then, that as soon as he expired, his blessed Soul descended into that Part of Hell call'd *Limbo*, where the Souls of the Fathers were detain'd, and there he remain'd with them. During which Time they were in Possession of Glory, for the Vision of God is the perfect Glory of the Blessed. Oh how great was his Bounty, how great his Love, and how great his Humility! He could if he had pleas'd have deliver'd his Servants by the Means of an angelical Messenger, who might have conducted them to his Presence in whatever Place he had chosen: but this his infinite Love and Humility would not suffer him to do. Wherefore he himself descended; and tho' Lord of all, visited them, not as Servants, but as intimate and familiar Friends, and remain'd with them till *Sunday* following near the Break of Day. Think well on this, and endeavour to copy after so great a Pattern.

The holy Fathers were in an Extasy of immense Joy at the Approach of their Redeemer: All Anxiety then gave Place to ineffable Delight, and their Petitions and Sollicitations for a speedy Deliverance from this State of Captivity were changed into Praises and Thanksgiving for the

the inexpressible Benefit of their present Redemption. When therefore the Soul of *Jesus* advanced towards them, imagin you see the holy Tribe assembled together, hasting with Transports of earnest Alacrity to meet him, and cry out to him : *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because he has visited and wrought the Redemption of his People.* Raise up your drooping Heads, O afflicted Fellow-captives, for behold your Redemption is coming. Rise up, rise up, O *Jerusalem*, break the Chain from off your Neck, behold the Saviour comes to ransom us from our Fetters. Lift up your Gates, O Princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal Gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in. We adore you, O *Christ*, and we bless you, our most loving God. And thus falling down they adored him with unspeakable Joy and Gratitude. Thus did they continue in Lauds and Thanksgiving before our Lord till the Dawn of the Third Day. At which Time our Lord, heading this happy Tribe, led them glorious and triumphant from that subterraneous Place of their Captivity to that earthly Paradise of Delights, where those glorious Prophets of God *Elias* and *Enoch* are waiting the coming of Antichrist whom they are appointed to oppose. Here our blessed Redeemer staid sometime with them, and here they still persisted, in Conjunction with those two venerable Men, in praising, thanksgiving, and glorifying their all-gracious Benefactor. At length our Saviour told them, that it was Time for him to leave them and to depart to reassume his sacred Body, by a glorious Resurrection. Go then, say they, O divine, O bounteous Redeemer, O King of Glory, compleat the merciful

ciful Work you have so graciously begun and so divinely carried on ; but oh vouchsafe speedily to return to us that our Joy be redoubled in the desirable Sight of your sacred Body, which we have so long and so earnestly yearn'd and sigh'd after.

You see then, O devout Reader, that you need not want Matter of pious Meditation, during the Interval between our Lord's Death and Resurrection. Hitherto I have made but few and short Meditations on the whole Passion of *Christ*, that the Mind might not be taken off from attending to the Series of his Sufferings. But now it will not be improper to make some serious Reflections concerning it.

What think you, O Christian Soul ? Can you owe any Thing less than your whole Life to *Christ*, who generously laid down his precious Life for you ; and bore the most excruciating Torments himself, to free you from bearing them for all Eternity ? Were the Lives of all the Sons of *Adam*, the Duration of the Angels, and the Worth of the whole Creation, to be united in one living Creature, yet would such a Creature be nothing in comparison with that beautiful stupendous and blessed Body of his. Were all the excellent Talents of every animated Being to be center'd in one, what would they be to the superior Virtues assembled in his Conception from the Holy Ghost, in his Birth from a Virgin, in the Innocence of his Life, in the Elegance of his Doctrine, in the Brilliancy of his Miracles, in the Revelation of his Sacraments and Mysteries. Were all the Torments, which Nature can suffer to be inflicted on one Being, yet would they be nothing in value to what he went through,

in

in the Series of his Life, Passion and Death. The Heavens then are not so high exalted above the Earth as his Ways are above ours, and his Life above our Life. Nay, *Nothing*, unexisting nothing bears a nearer Proportion to Something than our Life does to his. Nothing can be so excellent as this, nothing is more miserable than that. Our Life is all Corruption, his Life Purity itself: Ours of no Worth, his of immense Value. And yet he grudg'd not to lay down that precious Life, to save us from eternal Death. O Excess of Goodness! When therefore we have devoted to him our Life, and all that is valuable in it, we fall still as short of what he has done for us, and our Offering is no more to be compar'd to his, than the twinkling Light of the remotest Star to the Lustre of the Sun, the least Drop of Water to a great River, a Pebble to an enormous Mountain, or a Grain of Wheat to a Summer's Harvest.

'Twas not of trivial Matters that this blessed Redeemer stripp'd himself for you. He lower'd himself, and that not a little, to exalt you: He lower'd himself to Flesh, he lower'd himself to Death, and the Death of the Cross. O who can express this Excess of Humility, Meekness, and Condescension in the God of Majesty's deigning, to put on Flesh, to be punish'd with Death, to be disgraced with a Cross? Perhaps it may be ask'd: But could not the Creator have repair'd the Work of his own Hands, without all this Difficulty? Doubtless, he could; but he chose to do otherwise, though to his own Cost; that the base and detestable Crime of Ingratitude might no more take Root in the Heart of Man. He suffer'd therefore an immensity

of

of Labour and Hardships, to provoke Man to pay him the just Debt of an immensity of Love; and to move him, whom the Facility of his Creation had render'd ungrateful and indevout to be grateful and earnest in Thanksgiving for his Redemption which was wrought with so much Difficulty. How did ungrateful Man reason upon his Creation? I was made indeed out of nothing gratis, but I was made without any Expence or Labour to my Maker; he said, and I was made, like all other Beings. But now *the Month of them that speak Lies was stopp'd.* And now, O Man, the immense Cost which God has been at in redeeming you is as apparent as the Noon-day Sun. Your Redeemer to ransom you disdain'd not becoming from a Sovereign Lord an humble Servant, from infinitely Rich extremely Poor, from the immortal Word mortal Flesh, from the Son of God the Son of Man.

Consider yourself rightly then, and remember that if you was made of nothing, you was not redeemed with nothing, In six Days God created all Things, and you among the rest: But he was three and thirty Years upon Earth labouring and working your Redemption, O how hardly did he toil, bearing the Necessities of the Flesh, the Anxieties and Tribulations of the Spirit, and all the severe Trials his Enemies could put him to! Did he not heap to himself all the Horrors of Death, and aggravate those Horrors with the Ignominy of the Cross?

O how amiable, lovely *Jesus*, how amiable to me above all Things does thy Chalice render thee! that Chalice, that bitter, bitter Draught which

which thou vouchsafedst to drink for our Redemption! This, this demands and justly demands all our Affection: This alone ought to engross all our Love: This alone should suffice sweetly to attract, justly to win, closely to knit, and forcibly to captivate us to thee. You see then, pious Reader, that the Author of Nature was at no Expence in the Fabric of the World in comparison of what it cost the Redeemer of Nature to restore it. He spoke but, and the Former was made, he but gave his Orders and it was created. But in the Latter his Words were contradicted, his Actions reprimanded, he was insulted with Torments, was punished with Death, and reviled with the Cross.

It was the Height of infinite Goodness in *Christ* to deliver up his Life a Prey to Death for us; and to pay down from out of his own sacred Side the full Ransom due to his eternal Father, In this how truly did he fulfill what the *Psalmist* sung of him. *With the Lord is Mercy, and with him plentiful Redemption!* Plentiful indeed was this Redemption, to effect which he pour'd forth not a single Drop, not from one Part of his Body, but Seas of Blood from five several Parts, besides a River from every Pore. Think then, O Man, on the Greatness of your Obligation: Think on the Debt of Love you owe him. What is it he should have done and has not done for you? He has enlightened you, when blind; unbound you, when in Chains; set you right, when astray; and reconciled you, when guilty. Who then can forbear running willingly and cheerfully after him who delivers us from Error, and
winks

winks at our Frailties, who gives us living the Means to merit, and bestows on us in Death the Reward of the Merit he gives? What Excuse can any one plead for not running after the fragrant Odour of his Unguents? Not surely that the Fragrancy of it did not reach him? The Odour of his sweet-scented Life has gone through the whole Earth. For the whole Earth is full of his Mercy, and the Effects of his Mercy surpass all his other Works. He therefore who is insensible to, or follows not, this fragrant Odour is totally dead, or totally corrupted.

The holy Spouse in the *Canticles* is not ashamed of the Blackness she borrow'd from her Spouse, whom to be like is the Summit of true Glory. There is nothing more glorious than to put on the Blackness of Reproach which *Christ* himself put on. Hence says the Apostle, with salutary Transport: *Far be it from me to glory in any Thing but the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* How dear ought the Ignominy of the Cross to be to all those who are so happy as not to be at Variance with him who suffer'd on it for our Sakes? There is a Blackness in it, we must own, but that Blackness is beautiful inasmuch as it was the Form and Likeness of our Lord. Whom else did *Isaiab*, in Spirit, call the Man of Sorrows, knowing Infirmary, who *had neither Form nor Comeliness.* Him, says he, we esteemed Striken, smitten of God and humbled. But he was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities, and with his Stripes we are healed.

What,

What, Fellow Christians! Did *Christ* take upon him the Shame of Sin for our Sakes, and shall we be ashamed of being vilified or reputed black for his Sake? Look attentively on this vilified Saviour, disfigured in Dress and Mock-Garments, defaced with bloody Wounds, defiled with nauseous Spittle, mortified with Blows, and pale with Death. What more deform'd or blacken'd could strike the Eyes of his Beholders, than he, when, with his Arms wide-extended on the Cross, he afforded Laughter to his inveterate Enemies, Tears to the Faithful, and Agony to convulsed Nature, when he alone was a Subject of Mockery and Sport, who alone was worthy to command Respect, and able to inflict Terror through the whole Universe?

Meditate therefore, O pious Reader, the Sufferings of that sacred, crucified Body, and see if there is any Thing there which does not plead for you to the eternal Father. For you it is that that divine Head is pierced with innumerable Thorns. My People, says the Lord, by his Prophet, have cover'd me all over with the Thorns of their Sins. Lest your Head should ach, lest your Intentions should be wounded, his Eyes were closed by Death, and the Luminaries of the World were at that Instant extinct. At the Darkening of his sacred Eyes, those great Lights were eclipsed with the rest, and universal Darkness overshadowed the whole Earth. And why all this, but that your Eyes might be averted from beholding Vanity, or being attracted by it.

Those

Those blessed Ears which perpetually hear in Heaven, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbath*, heard upon Earth, *Thou hast a Devil, Crucify him, crucify him*. And all, that your Ears might be deaf no longer to the Voice of God, or to the Cries of the Poor : but deaf to Detraction, deaf to Discourses injurious to God or detrimental to your Brother, and deaf to every vain and unprofitable Sound.

That divinely beauteous Face, the most comely of all among the Sons of Men, was defiled with Spittle, disfigured with Bruises, profaned with Dirt, and set to Scorn, that your Face might be made fair and shining ; and, become confident in Goodness, might not turn to opposite Extremes.

That blessed Mouth which directed Angels and instructed Men in heavenly Knowledge, which but spoke and all Things were done according to his Will, was plied with Vinegar and Gall ; and why ? but that your Mouth and Heart might thenceforth be enabled to relish the Sweetness of Truth, and confess your God.

Those heavenly Hands, which molded the Earth and Heavens, were barbarously stretch'd with Nails on the Cross. Why did your guiltless Saviour submit to this, but to purchase you the Grace of keeping your Hands ever open to the Relief of the Needy and Distress'd ; and to qualify you to say with the *Psalmist* : *My Soul is always in my Hands* ? What we carry in our Hands we cannot easily forget, and thus he who has his Soul for ever in his Hands by his indefatigable Industry in good Works, cannot be mindless of it.

X.

Those

Those sacred Feet whose Footstool we ought to adore, because it is holy, were inhumanly transfix'd with Nails, that your Feet might not hurry to Evil, but run on in the Way of the Commandments of your God. *They have pierced my Feet,* says the Prophet in the Person of *Christ,* *they have number'd all my Bones.* For you he sacrificed his Flesh and his Life, to purchase your Body and Soul; and thus he ransom'd *all you are,* with *all he is himself.*

Rouse yourself up then, my Soul, and, shaking off your Dust, contemplate this memorable, this incomparable Man, this Man-God, whom you see before you in the transparent Chrystal of the holy Gospel. Consider, my Soul, who is this, who proceeds with the majestic Air of a Monarch, though cover'd with the Ignominy of a despicable Slave? He moves with a Crown on his Head, but his Diadem is an Instrument of Torments, and his sacred Temples are transfix'd with innumerable Wounds from it. He is deck'd in royal Robes, but they are to him Badges of Scorn instead of Honour. He waves a Scepter in his Hand, not to command others, but to be struck with it himself. He is adored with bended Knees, proclaim'd a King, and receives the Homages of a numerous Multitude, but they are Marks of Contempt instead of Duty and Fidelity. His lovely Visage is spit upon, his beautiful Cheeks are buffeted, and his honourable Neck bends under Dishonour.

Behold, my Soul, how this sacred Man of Sorrows, is abused and reviled. He is commanded all faint and sinking beneath his Stripes to bend his sacred Shoulders under the heavy Load of his Cross, and to bear his Ignominy

to

to the Place of Execution. He is rais'd on the Cross, he is insulted and scoff'd at there, and admitted no other Comfort than a Draught of Vinegar mix'd with Gall. And in return for all this Usage, he only says: *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* What a stupendous One is this, who amidst all his Torments and Ill-usage never once open'd his Mouth to complain of, accuse, threaten, or curse the accursed Brutes, who are busied in doing him such cruel Injustice! But after all their Ill-treatment of him breaks forth into such Terms of Blessing as have no Example. What Instance of Meekness, Patience, and Goodness can we produce like him?

But look, my Soul, yet a little nigher, and see how worthy he is to engross all your Admiration and Pity. Behold him naked, and torn with Stripes, suspended by iron Nails on an Ignominious Cross between two Thieves, plied with Vinegar and Gall, persecuted to Death, nay even beyond Death with a Lance which rips open his sacred Side. And view him thus pouring forth five Rivers of precious Blood from his Hands, Feet, and Side. Open, open your Sluices, my Eyes, and thou, O my Soul, melt into Tenderness, dissolve into Pity for this most lovely of the Sons of Men, whom thou see'st amidst all this Meekness oppress'd with every injurious Treatment.

O look down, Lord, eternal Father! look down from your Sanctuary above, and behold this sacred Offering which our High-Priest, your holy Son *Jesus Christ*, offers to you for the Sins of us his Brethren, and be propitious to the Multitude of our Iniquities and Greatness of our Malice.

lice. Behold, the Blood of our Brother *Jesus* crying to you from the Cross: *Behold I am crown'd with Glory and Honour.* Earnest he stands solliciting at your Right-Hand for us; for he is our Flesh and our Brother.

Look, oh Lord, on the Countenance of *Christ* thy Son, who is become obedient to thee even to Death, and let not the Marks of his Wounds be ever from before thy Eyes, that thou mayst always remember the Satisfaction he has made to thee for our Sins. Would, O Lord, that the Sins by which we have deserved thy Indignation were placed in a Ballance with the Calamity which thy most innocent Son *Jesus* suffer'd for us! May every Tongue return thee Thanks, oh Lord, for thy great Goodness to us, who sparedst not thy only Son, but deliverdst him to Death for us, to the end we might have so great, so true an Advocate with thee in Heaven! And to thee, oh blessed *Jesus*, what Acts of Thanksgiving, or what Retribution worthy thy Acceptance can I make, who am Dust and Ashes—a vile Compound of Clay? For what was there wanting for my Salvation which thou hast not done? From the Crown of the Head to the Soal of the Foot thou wast wholly plung'd in the Waters of Suffering and Affliction, to extract me out of the same. The Waters have enter'd even to thy blessed Soul. Thy Soul was separated by Death, that thou might restore me mine which I had lost. Wherefore thou hast bound me to thee by a double Debt, that is, by what thou hast bestow'd upon me, and by what thou hast lost for my sake: I am indebted to thee for my Life which twice thou hast given me, once in my Creation, and once in my Redemption.

Where-

Wherefore I have nothing to offer thee which more justly is thy Due, than my Life itself. I cannot find what Recompence Man can make thee, O *Christ*, for thy precious Soul which was so much troubled, and burden'd with Affliction. For were the Heavens, the Earth, and all the Beauties belonging to them, in my Power, they would all fall short of the Greatness of the Debt I owe thee. It is thy Gift, oh Lord, that I even make thee any Part of that Return which I owe thee. I ought to love thee with all my Heart, with all my Soul, with all my Mind, and with all my Strength, and to follow thy Example who vouchsafedst to die for me : and how shall I be able to do this but by thy Help? My Soul shall follow close after thee because her whole Strength depends on thee. Thus far *S. Bernard* ; but let us now proceed to the Resurrection of our Lord *Jesus*.



C H A P. LXXII.

Of the glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and how he appear'd first to his blessed Mother.

EARLY on the Sunday Morning, before the Break of Day, the Soul of our blessed Jesus, accompanied by a glorious Tribe of blessed Spirits, return'd again to the Sepulchre where his Body lay : And re-assuming the same he arose by Virtue of his sacred Divinity, and miraculously went out of the Grave without opening it. And about the same Time, *Mary Magdalen, Mary of James, and Mary of Salome*, taking Leave of our blessed Lady, set out towards the Sepulchre of our Lord, taking with them many precious Ointments which they had prepar'd for that Purpose. The blessed Virgin in the mean Time remain'd at home, fix'd in devout Prayer, which we may piously imagin she made in the Manner following : Most merciful Father, full of Clemency and Pity, you know that my most beloved and blessed Son is now dead and buried, and that he was first cruelly fix'd to a disgraceful Cross between two Thieves, and that after he had resign'd his blessed Soul to you, I myself help'd to place in the Sepulchre his sacred Body, which I conceived without Blemish, and bore without Pain, Thou knowest, oh Lord, he was all the Good I possess'd, all I could desire, and the only Comfort and Life of my Soul. But at length he was suddenly snatch'd from
me

me, being full of Sorrow, cover'd with Wounds, rent & scourg'd, and by his cruel Enemies shamefully, abused, and condemn'd to Death; so that he was forsaken by his Disciples who fled from him, and I his disconsolate and afflicted Mother could noways help him. But now, oh Father of Mercy, though at that Time it pleased thee not to deliver him from that cruel and bitter Passion, yet as thy holy Will is now fully accomplish'd, and 'tis in thy Power to restore him again safely to me; I beseech thy divine Majesty to do it. Why does he tarry so long from me? Send him speedily to me, oh most bountiful Father, for my Soul can have no Peace till I behold him. Oh my most sweet Son *Jesus*, where art thou now? What art thou doing, and why dost thou stay so long before thou comest to relieve me? Make no longer Delay, I beseech thee, but come; for thou thyself saidst, that thou wouldst rise the third Day, and is not this the third Day? Rise therefore, my Beloved, my Joy, and comfort me with thy Presence, whom thou hast so much afflicted with thy Absence.

As our Lady was thus praying and bathing herself in Floods of Tears which flow'd from her lovely Eyes, our blessed Lord appear'd suddenly to her, and stood before her in White, and with pleasing and loving Aspect solaced her saying: *Hail, holy Parent*. And she surprised with sudden Joy said: Art thou my blessed Son *Jesus*? And bowing down she adored him. And he again to her: 'Tis I, my beloved Mother, I am risen again from Death, and am now present with you. My Sorrows are ceased,

I have triumph'd over Death, and have overcome all my Pain and Anguish, so that they can never more have any Power over me: To whom she answer'd: Blessed be thy omnipotent and eternal Father who has comforted me again with thy Presence; may his holy Name be exalted, magnified, and praised for ever. Thus lovingly conversing together our Lord Jesus related to her the Things he had wrought in those three Days after his Passion, and how he deliver'd the Fathers from the Prison in which they were confin'd. Wherefore this is a sovereign *Pascha*, this the joyful Day of which the royal Prophet spoke, saying: *This is the Day which our Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad therein.*



C H A P. LXXIII.

Concerning the Coming of the three Marys to the Monument, and of the Race between Peter and John.

THE *Magdalen*, as we have said before, in Company of the other two *Marys*, went to the Monument with the Ointments. When they came to the Entrance of the Sepulchre, they were in a Kind of Concern how they should get in, *Who will roll away the Stone for us from the Monument*, say they? But no sooner had they said it, than looking up they saw the Stone removed and an Angel sitting upon it, who said to them, *Be not afraid*. They however, disappointed of their Hopes by not finding the Body of our Lord, gave little Attention to the Angel; but running back affrighted, told the Disciples that our Lord's Body was taken away. Upon which *Peter* and *John* immediately arose and ran to the Monument with Zeal and Anxiety, and the *Marys* after them. When they came thither they found not the Body, but only the Winding-sheet and other Linnen it was wrapt in. Wherefore they return'd back immediately with their Eyes bathed in Tears, and their Hearts rending with Affliction. They sought their Lord but could not find him, nor knew they now where or which Way to seek for him. Compassionate them then, pious Reader, in so great an Affliction.

C H A P.

C H A P. LXXIV.

Concerning our Lord's appearing to the three Marys.

TH E *Marys* however remain'd there, and looking towards the Monument saw two Angels standing in white, who said to them, *Whom do you seek ? Do you seek, One living, among the Dead ?* But they gave no Attention to the Angels, nor receiv'd any Comfort from this Vision. For they came not to seek Angels but the Lord of Angels. Two of the *Marys* therefore lost and absorb'd in Affliction, withdrew to a little Distance from the Monument and sat down to sooth their Grief. While the *Magdalen* at a Loss what to do, and unable to live without her divine Master, sat sadly pensive and weeping at the Mouth of the Sepulchre : Where again she saw the same Angels, who again ask'd her : *Woman, why do you weep ? Whom do you seek ?* They have taken away my Lord, said she, and I know not where they have laid him. O wonderful Operation of Love ! One Angel had told her he was risen ; and two others had assured her, he was alive ; and yet so forgetful is she as to say, *I know not.* Love, divine Love was the Cause of this Self-oblivion in the *Magdalen*. For as *Origen* says on this Passage, her Soul was not with *her*, but with her divine Master. Hence she *knew not* ; that is, she knew neither how to hear, remember, nor think without him. Wherefore while thus she

con-

continued weeping, disconsolate, and regardless of all the Angel said to her, her divine Master, overcome as it were by her Excess of Love, appear'd to her to console her, and said, *Woman, whom seek you, why do you weep?* At first she knew him not, but inebriated with Affection, answered him, *Lord, if you have taken my Lord away, tell me where you have put him.* Think then you see this glorious Woman with her Face bathed in a Flood of Tears, beseeching, and with every moving Remonstrance earnestly conjuring him to tell her, where she may find the beloved Object she was in search of: For still she hoped to hear some glad Things of him. How grateful a Sight was this to *Christ!* He therefore again said to her, *Mary!* When immediately, coming as it were to herself, and knowing him by his Voice, she cried out in a Transport of unutterable Joy, *Rabbi!* that is, *Master!* Ah, you are the sweet, the adorable Lord I was seeking with so much Eagerness! Then rising she ran to have embraced his Feet. But our Lord to raise her Mind to a more celestial Affection, and wean her from his earthly Presence, said to her: *Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but tell my Brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father.* After they had a while conversed in a celestial Manner with each other, our Lord gave her his Blessing and departed, when she full of Joy and spiritual Comfort went to her Companions and told them the glad some News. They were exceedingly overjoy'd at the Tydings of our Lord's Resurrection: but when they found they were not blessed with a Sight of him, they departed homewards with Grief and Dejection. But as the above-

men-

mention'd three *Marys* were proceeding on their Way, before they came to the City, the benign *Jesus* vouchsafed to appear to them, saying, *Hail!* No sooner did they hear and see him, than seized with a Joy beyond the Power of Words to express, they fell on their Faces and adored him. Here again our Lord vouchsafed to enter into a gracious and ineffable Conversation with them for some time, concerning his sublime Mysteries. After which he told them: *Bid my Brethren come to me in Galilee, there they will see me as I foretold them.* Admire here the great Humility of our Lord *Jesus* in calling his poor, lowly Disciples his Brethren. This you see is a Virtue, which *Christ* laid not aside even after his Resurrection. Meditate then devoutly on these edifying Subjects. And if you are desirous of reaping full Advantage from the Contemplation of them, endeavour to be as present in Spirit, as these holy Persons were in Body.



C H A P. LXXV.

Of our Lord's appearing to Joseph, to James the Less, and to Peter.

OUR Lord *Jesus* after departing from the *Marys* appear'd to *Joseph of Arimathea* who had buried him, visiting him in Prison. For the *Jews* had seized him and confined him in a Jail, with an Intent to put him to Death after the Sabbath. Our Lord therefore appear'd to him, and wiping off the Tears and Damp from off his Face led him out, the Doors unopen'd, as ancient pious Tradition informs us. He also appear'd to *James the Less*, who had vow'd never to taste any Nourriture, till he should see our Lord risen from the Dead. To him therefore, and to those who were with him, he commanded that they should spread the Table, then taking Bread and blessing it he gave to him saying, Eat my beloved Brother; For the Son of Man is risen from the Dead. See *St. Jerome, on Ecclesiastical Writers. Tom. I.*

When the *Marys* return'd home and acquainted the Disciples with the Resurrection of *Christ*, *Peter* extremely afflicted that he had not seen his Lord, and unable, through Excess of Love, to rest without seeing him, arose immediately and went alone to the Sepulchre, not knowing where else so speedily to find him. While therefore he was proceeding on his Way, *Jesus* appear'd to him and said: *Peace be to you Simon Peter.* Then *Peter*, striking his Breast, and prostrating himself

self on the Ground, in a Flood of Tears, cried out, O Lord! O dearest Saviour! I have sinned against thee, I acknowledge my Crime in leaving thee in thy Distress, and shamefully denying thee thrice. And when his Love and Grief stop'd his Words he embraced his Master's holy Feet, and tenderly kiss'd them. Our Lord then raised him and embracing him, said again: Peace to thee, *Simon Peter*, fear not, thy Sins are forgiven thee. Thy Denial I foresaw and foretold thee, and now I forgive thee. Go and confirm thy Brethren in the Belief of my Resurrection. And be confident thyself, that I have conquer'd for thee all thy Enemies, and even Death itself. Thus a while they stood solemnizing a glorious *Pascha* in heavenly Conversation. After which *Peter* return'd to our blessed Lady and the Disciples, and related to them all he had seen and heard. In the Gospel there is no Mention made of our Lord's appearing to his sacred Mother. I have however taken Notice of it, first, because the Church seems to countenance my doing so, as may appear more plainly in the Legend on the Resurrection.



C H A P. LXXVI.

*Of Christ's Return to the holy Fathers
after his Resurrection.*

O U R Lord *Jesus* not having yet visited the holy Fathers after his Resurrection; as soon as he departed from *Peter* took a numerous Retinue of Angels and went to visit them. When the venerable Tribe saw him coming towards them, they went to meet him with excessive Transports of spiritual Joy, singing; Behold our King comes, let us meet our Saviour. Our mighty Beginning, and his Kingdom shall have no End. This is a blissful Day that shines forth to us, Come all, and let us adore the Lord. Then prostrating themselves they adored him, and rising continued singing with Reverence, Fervour, and Joy his Praises, saying: Thou hast risen our Glory, we will be glad and rejoice in thee. Thy Kingdom is of all Ages, and thy Dominion shall last from Generation to Generation. We depart not from you, and you shall raise us, and we will magnify your holy Name. Our Leader is come forth, made a High Priest for ever. This, this is the Day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice thereon. The Day of Redemption has shone forth to us, of ancient Reparation, and of eternal Felicity. This Day throughout the Universe the Heavens distil Honey: because

cause the Lord has reign'd from a Tree. The Lord has reign'd, the Lord has put on Comeliness, he has put on Strength, and girded himself. Sing to him a new Song for he has wrought Wonders. His Right-hand and his holy Arm hath saved us to himself. For we are his People and the Sheep of his Pasture. Come let us adore him. When the Evening drew nigh, *Jesus* acquainted them with his Design of going again to visit his poor afflicted Brethren, who, after his Death were disperfed like Sheep having no Shepherd, and were seeking him with utmost Anxiety. I will return therefore, says he, to them that I may console, and strengthen them, and will soon come back to release you. Then the holy Fathers prostrating themselves again adored him, saying: Go, Lord *Jesus*, blessed be thy holy Name; and be all Things done according to thy divine Word and Will.



CHAP.

C H A P. LXXVII.

Of Christ's appearing to the two Disciples going to Emaus.

AS two Disciples were walking together towards the little Town of *Emaus*, talking of what had happen'd in a melancholy manner, and in a kind of Despondency about him; our Lord *Jesus* came up to them, and in the Guise of a Traveller join'd in Conversation with them, interrogating, answering them, and giving them salutary Maxims, as the Gospel relates. At length suffering himself to be forced by them, he went in with them, and manifested himself to them. Here, pious Reader, contemplate the Goodness of *Christ*. For, *First*, such is his ardent Love for his Disciples, that he cannot suffer them long to wander in Uncertainty and Affliction. Like a faithful Friend, a trusty Companion, and an affable Lord, he joins with them, enquires the Cause of their Affliction, and exposes the Scriptures to them in such a Manner as to cleanse their Hearts from all Rust of earthly Affections, and influence them with divine Love. Thus does he daily behave towards us in a spiritual Manner. If overcome by any Afflictions, Perplexities, or Languor of Soul, we talk of him, he is immediately with us comforting, enlightening, and inflaming our Hearts to his Love. Of such excellent Advantage is it to us to talk of God in our Adversities or Tribulation. Hence, says the Prophet, *how*

Y

sweet

sweet are thy Words to my Taste, sweeter to my Mouth than Honey and the Honey-comb. And again, My Heart wax'd hot within me, and Fire burns in my Meditation.

Secondly, Behold the Goodness of our Lord in feigning that he was going farther, in order to encrease their Desire of his Stay with them, and to induce them to invite and detain him. How gracious was it in him to go with them, to break Bread with them, to bless that Bread with his sacred Hands for them, and afterwards to reveal himself to them? Does he not do the same towards us all as often as we apply to Prayer and holy Meditation? Thus then does it behove us to pray without ceasing.



C H A P. LXXVIII.

*Of our Lord's appearing to the Disciples,
who were shut up on the Day of the
Resurrection.*

TH E two Disciples immediately return'd to *Jerusalem*, and finding the other Disciples, except *Thomas*, assembled together, they related to them what had happen'd to them, where they likewise heard in their Turn, a Confirmation of our Lord's being risen, and having appear'd to *Simon*. During this Conversation our Lord *Jesus* himself came into the Room, the Doors being shut, and saluted them all, saying: *Peace be with you*. The Disciples seeing our Lord fell on their Faces, and acknowledging their Fault in having fled at his Passion, they received him with great Alacrity. Our Lord then comforted them, saying: Rise, Brethren, your Sins are forgiven you. After which he stood familiarly amongst them shewing them the Prints of his sacred Wounds. Mean time the Table being spread by his Order, he then sat down and eat part of a Fish and some Honey which was set before him. Then he breathed upon them, saying: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*. O how full of Joy and spiritual Delight was this Interview!

Imagin too you see here our blessed Lady, for it was to her that the Disciples flock'd when they assembled together after the Death of our Lord. O with what' inexpressible Joy is she

not fill'd at the Sight of her glorious and triumphant Son in the Midst of his Disciples, and how studious, how pleased, and how devoutly transported is she in doing little Offices of Reverence and Love towards him ! And how willing is our Lord to add to her Delight by accepting little Services from her, and making her Returns of Honour and Affection before his Disciples. Forget not likewise to cast an Eye of Devotion towards the *Magdalen*, that Favourite among the Disciples, that kind of female Apostle among the Apostles. Fancy you see her as usual sitting at the Feet of her divine Master, absorb'd in Attention to his Words, and transported with Joy whenever she has an Opportunity of ministering to him. O how heavenly must this Mansion be, and what a Blessing to be in it at this delicious Entertainment ! O this was a true *Pascha* ! Who must not Joy to be at it ? And what Delight must you not partake in contemplating it ? But perhaps you are present at it without being affected by it. Tho' if you was truly attentive to the Passion, and contemplated it with a sincere Fellow-feeling of the Sufferings of *Christ*, of his Mother, and of his Disciples you cannot but now partake in the Joys of their *Pascha*. The same Joys you might renew on every *Sunday*, if you were careful likewise to renew on the preceeding *Friday* and *Saturday* the devout Memorial of his Passion. For, as *St. Paul* says, *If you are Partakers of his Passions, so shall you be of his Comforts.*

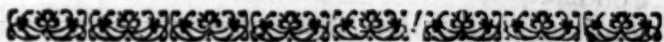
C H A P. LXXIX.

Of our Lord's appearing to the Disciples on the Octave of Easter, when St. Thomas was with them.

A GAIN on the eighth Day after his Resurrection, our Lord *Jesus* appear'd to his Disciples, the Doors being shut. And now *Thomas*, who the Time before was not of their Company, was present with them. To whom, when they gave him an Account of *Christ's* having vouchsafed them a Visit, he answer'd : *Unless I see in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and put my Finger in his Side, I will not believe.* *Christ* then, the good Shepherd, solicitous for his little Flock, in Compassion to the Frailty of this his beloved Disciple stands before them all and graciously salutes them with, *Peace be with you.* Then addressing himself in particular to *Thomas* : *Reach hither your Finger*, said he, *and behold my Hands* ; stretch forth your Hand and put it in my Side, and be not Incredulous but Faithful. Then *Thomas*, after having touch'd the Wounds of *Jesus*, falling on his Face, said : *My Lord and my God !* Thus making Reparation for his former Unbelief. For now, though he saw but the Humanity of our Lord, he confess'd his Godhead. After this he join'd with his Fellow-Disciples in acknowledging the Fault of forsaking so divine a Master at the Time of his Passion. But our Lord *Jesus* graciously rais'd him up, bid him be of Courage, and mercifully

cifully forgave him all former Faults. It was doubtless by special Dispensation of Heaven that *Thomas* was permitted to hesitate in Faith, that *Christ's* Resurrection might more evidently appear. How glorious does the Bounty and Condescension of this sweet Saviour shine towards his weak Disciples, and particularly to *Thomas*, in shewing to them his sacred Wounds, to remove from their Souls every Cloud of Doubt, for their and our Advantage! Three great Ends he proposed to himself in preserving the Prints of his sacred Wounds, that by them he might confirm his Apostles and Faithful in the Faith of his Resurrection; that while he was acting the Office of our Mediator with his divine Father he might the more easily appease him, by shewing them to his eternal Majesty; and finally, that he might in the Day of Judgment clear himself to the Reprobate by reminding them of what he had suffer'd to redeem them, if they would have been redeem'd. Our Lord *Jesus* remains thus a while with his blessed Mother and the beloved Disciples, talking with them of the Kingdom of God, while they stand listening to his ineffable Doctrines, and dwelling on his divine Countenance, in Raptures of Admiration, Joy, and Love. Observe them standing round him, but our blessed Lady close by his Side, and the *Magdalen* in her usual Place at his sacred Feet. Do you too stand there reverently, yet at a Distance, if perchance your Humility, Compunction, and Devotion may move his Mercy to call you nearer to him. At length however our divine Saviour left them, telling them that he should thence repair to *Galilee*,

lilee, where again they might see him ; and departing he gave them his Blessing. They remain'd then a while together still hungry and thirsting after him, not satiated with his Presence tho' greatly comforted.



C H A P. LXXX.

How our Lord Jesus appear'd to his Disciples in Galilee.

THE Disciples were no sooner repair'd to Galilee, as our Lord had appointed them, than he appear'd to them, saying : *All Power is given to me in Heaven and Earth, Go ye therefore and teach all Nations : BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST, teaching them to believe all those Things I have commanded you, and behold I am with you always even to the End of the World, Mat. xxviii.* After this they all humbly adored him, and remain'd with him for some Time, with great Joy, and Satisfaction. Consider them well, and contemplate the above-mention'd Words he spake to them : for they are full of Mystery and heavenly Consolation. For, *First*, he shew'd them that he is Lord of all Things. *Secondly*, He gave them Authority and a Command to preach. *Thirdly*, He taught them the Form of Baptism. And finally, He encouraged

raged and comforted them, by promising always to be with them to the End of the World. Consider then the sweet and singular Joy they receive, and the many great and wonderful Tokens of Love he shews them, which being done he farther gave them his Blessing and then disappear'd.



CH A P. LXXXI.

How he appear'd to them again near the Sea of Tiberias.

WHILE the Disciples remain'd in Galilee, on a certain Time, seven of them went out to fish in the Sea of Tiberias, and having labour'd the whole Night they caught nothing. Here at the Break of Day our Lord appear'd again to them standing on the Sea-shoar, and asking them if they had taken any Fish, they answer'd him, No. Wherefore he said: Cast the Net on the right Side of the Boat and you shall find some. They did as he order'd them, and they were not able to draw the Net for the Multitude of Fish. Then John said to Peter: It is our Lord. Peter when he heard it was their Lord put on his Coat (for he was then naked) and cast himself into the Sea to come to him; but the other Disciples came in the Boat. When they came to Land they saw hot Coals lying, and a Fish laid thereon, and Bread, which

the

the Lord had prepared for them. He bid them likewise to bring some of the Fish they had taken and dress them, and he eat with them on the Sea-side. And according to his accustomed Humility he minister'd to them, he broke the Bread and gave it them, and gave them likewise of the Fish. The seven Disciples with great Alacrity of Spirit conversed with their Lord, and with all Submission and Respect eat with him, admiring, with Hearts full of Joy, the Affability of his pleasing Countenance. They received from his sacred Hands the Food he gave them, and with no less abundance and spiritual Comfort, replenish'd their Souls, than their Bodies. Oh what a divine and celestial Banquet! Consider well every Particular, and endeavour to feed thy Soul with them.

When the Refection was over, our Lord addressing himself to *Peter*, said: *Lovest thou me more then these?* To whom *Peter*; *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* Wherefore he said to him: *Feed my Lambs.* Our Lord repeated the same Question three Times, and at every Time recommended to him his Flock. Whence we may see the singular Bounty and Care of our Lord *Jesus*, and especially his exceeding Charity and Love for our Souls, by his repeated Recommendations of them to *Peter's* Care. After this he foretels *Peter* the Death he should suffer for his Sake, saying: *When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy Hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wilt not.* And this he said to signify,
that

that by the Death of the Cross he should glorify God. After this, *Peter* desired to know of our Lord in what Manner *John* should suffer; and our Lord answer'd him, saying: *So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee?* As if he had said, I will not that he follow me by the Way of Sufferings and Passion as thou shalt, but that he live to a full and complete Age, and end his Days in Peace. Some of the Disciples understood by that Saying, that he was never to die.

After these Things our Lord disappear'd, and return'd again, according to his usual Custom, to the holy Fathers, The Disciples remain'd greatly comforted, and return'd soon again to *Jerusalem*.



C H A P. LXXXII.

*How our Lord Jesus appear'd to more than
Five hundred Disciples together, with
something relating to all his Apparitions
in general.*

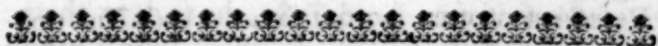
ST. Paul mentions, that our Lord *Jesus*, at another Time, appear'd to above five hundred Disciples gather'd together, but where, at what Time, or in what Manner, is uncertain, it being not register'd in Scripture. Yet we may well suppose that it was with his usual Meekness, Bounty, and Charity on his Side; and again, with no less Joy and Comfort to the Disciples than usual on their Side. And hitherto have we spoke of our Lord's appearing twelve several Times after his Resurrection, having omitted two other Apparitions which follow, when we shall treat of his Ascension. But there is Mention made only of ten in the Gospel. For it is not writen in any Place that he ever appear'd to his holy Mother, so that it is only piously believed he did. How he appear'd to *Joseph of Arimathea*, is writen in the Apocryphal Gospel of *Nicodemus*. And his appearing to *James*, St. Paul mentions in his Epistle to the *Corinthians*, as he does likewise that to the five hundred Brethren.

We may however devoutly suppose that he appear'd several other Times, for it is very probable that our most bountiful Lord often visited
his

his holy Mother, his beloved Disciples, and St. *Mary Magdalen*, comforting those in a special Manner who had suffer'd and been most afflicted at his bitter Death and Passion. And this seems to be the Opinion of St. *Augustin*, when, speaking of the Time of the Resurrection, he says: All Things relating to our Lord's appearing after his Resurrection are not written, for he conversed often with them. And 'tis not improbable that the holy Fathers, and chiefly *Abraham* and *David*, to whom the Lord made a special Promise of the Incarnation of his Son, came in Company with him to see the most excellent Virgin their Daughter, and God's most blessed Mother, who for them and for all others had found so much Grace, and borne the Saviour of the World. Oh with what Joy and Comfort did they behold her! With what Reverence did they incline to her, and with what Alacrity did they praise and honour her!

And here may we consider the great Benignity, and Charity, and the profound Meekness of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ* in this, that after his Resurrection, and the glorious Victory he had gain'd for us, he would not presently leave us and ascend into his Glory, but as a Pilgrim yet on Earth, would remain forty Days, and be conversant among us, to confirm and strengthen his Apostles in their Faith. This he might have done by his Angels, but such was his unspeakable Charity, that he would do it himself, by personally conversing with us for the Space of forty Days, appearing to his Apostles, and preaching to them of the Kingdom of Heaven. All this hath our most merciful Lord done for us, and yet we reflect little on it. He hath

hath always loved us, and still loves us, but yet such is our Ingratitude, that we return him not our Love for his, which is a Mark of great Unthankfulness in us towards him, notwithstanding the unbounded Charity he still has for us.



C H A P. LXXXIII.

Of the glorious Ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Touching the wonderful Ascension of our Lord *Jesus*, it behoves thee, Pious Reader, to awaken thy Heart, and to render thyself more than ordinarily attentive to all that is here said or done relating to this Subject, if thou desire to feed thy Soul with heavenly Comfort, and reap the spiritual Unction which plentifully flows from the devout Contemplation of so divine a Subject.

On the fortieth Day after the Resurrection our Lord *Jesus* knowing that his Time was now come, to depart from this World, and to pass hence to his Father, taking with him the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, and others, who after his Resurrection were in the terrestrial Paridise, and blessing, *Enoch* and *Elias*, who remain there still alive, he came to his Apostles who were gather'd together, in *Mount Sion*, which was the Place where he made his Last Supper
the

the Night before his Passion ; there was likewise with the Apostles in this Place the blessed Virgin, and many other Disciples, and our Lord appearing to them said, That he would eat with them before he departed from them, as a special Token and Memorial of the Love he bore them. And as they were all eating, being full of Joy and spiritual comfort at this last Refection of our Lord *Jesus*, he said to them : The Time is now come in which I must return again to him that sent me, but you shall remain in the City till you are cloathed with the Virtue descending from above : for within a few Days you shall be fill'd with the Holy Ghost as I before promised you. After which you shall be dispersed throughout the whole World to preach my Gospel, baptizing all that shall believe in me, so that you shall be my Witneses to the utmost Confinnes of the Earth. He likewise reprov'd them for their Incredibility in not believing them who had seen him rise (that is the Angels.) This he chose to do at the Time he was speaking to them of preaching his Gospel, to give them to understand : That they ought to have believed the Angels, even before they saw him, much sooner than they ought to be believed by those to whom they were to preach, who, nevertheless, would believe them (the Apostles) though they should not see him (*Jesus Christ*.) And this he did, that by knowing their Fault they might remain humble, shewing them at his Departure how much he admired that Virtue, and that he recommended it to them in a singular Manner. They asked him concerning many Things that were to come to pass, but he would

not

not resolve them, inasmuch as it was not necessary for them to know the Secrets of God, which his Father had reserved in his own Power to fulfill at his own Will and Pleasure. And thus they continued discoursing and eating together, with great Comfort and Satisfaction, occasioned by the Presence of their Lord, yet their Comfort was mix'd with some Grief, by reason of his near Departure from them. For they loved him so tenderly, that they could not hear him speak of leaving them without Heaviness and Sorrow.

And what can we think of his blessed Mother? May we not devoutly imagin that sitting near him, and hearing, what he said concerning his Departure, she was moved with the Tenderness of her motherly Affection; and that brimful of Grief which suddenly seiz'd, and oppress'd her blessed Soul, she inclined her Head towards him, and rested it upon his sacred Breast? For if *John* the Evangelist at the Last Supper took this Freedom, with much more reason may we suppose her to do the same on this doleful Occasion. Hence then with Tears and deepest Sighs she spoke to him in this Manner: Oh my beloved Son, I beseech thee not to leave me, but if thou must depart and return again to thy heavenly Father, take me, thy afflicted Mother along with thee! But our blessed Lord endeavour'd to comfort her, and said: Grieve not, Oh beloved Parent, at my leaving you, because I go to my Father, and 'tis expedient that you remain here a short Time longer, to confirm in their Faith such as shall be converted and believe in me, and after I will come again and take you with me to be a
Par-

Partaker of my Glory. To whom again our Lady replied: My beloved Son, may thy Will always be fulfill'd in all Things, for I am not only contented to remain here during thy Pleasure, but also to suffer Death for love of those Souls, for which thou hast so willingly vouchsafed to lay down thy Life; this however, I beseech thee, be thou ever mindful of me. Our Lord then again comforted her, with the rest of the Disciples, with *Mary Magdalen*, saying: Let not your Hearts be troubled, nor fear ye any Thing, I will not leave you desolate, I go, but will shortly return again to you, and will remain always with you. At length he bid them remove from thence and go to *Mount Olivet*, because from that Place he would ascend into Heaven in the Presence of them all: This said, he disappear'd.

His holy Mother, together with the rest of the Company, without any Delay, hasten'd to the said Mount, about a Mile distant from *Jerusalem*, as he had appointed them, where our Lord again soon appear'd to them. Behold on this Day we have two different Apparitions of our Lord. Thus being altogether our Lord embraced his holy Mother, and she again embraced him in a most tender Manner, taking Leave of each other. And the Disciples, and *Mary Magdalen*, and the rest falling down to the Ground, and weeping with Tenderness kiss'd his blessed Feet, and he raising them up, embraced all his Apostles most lovingly.

Let us now, Pious Reader, diligently consider them, and devoutly contemplate all that is here done, and amongst the rest, let us behold the holy Fathers, who being there present, tho' invisible

invisible, joyfully admire and inwardly praise the blessed Virgin, by whom they received so great a Benefit as their Salvation. They behold with pleasing Admiration the glorious Champions, and Leaders of God's Host, the Apostles, whom our Lord *Jesus* had chose, among all others to conquer and subdue the World, and bring it over to the Belief of his holy Doctrine.

At length when the Mysteries were all full'd and compleated, our Lord *Jesus* began gradually to raise himself up before them, and to ascend by his own Virtue and Power into Heaven. And then the blessed Virgin with the rest, fell down and devoutly worshipped him. And our Lady said: Oh my Beloved, I beseech thee, to be mindful of me: And with this she burst forth into Tears, not being able to refrain when she reflected on his Departure, yet was she full of inward Joy to see her blessed Son thus gloriously ascend into Heaven. His Disciples also when they beheld him ascending said: Thou knowest, Oh Lord, that we have renounced all Things for thee, wherefore we beseech thee not to forget us, but be ever mindful of us, for whom we have forsaken all. Then our Lord lifting up his Hands, with serene and pleasing Aspect, crown'd with Glory, victoriously ascended into Heaven, but first blessing them, he said: Be stedfast and fight courageously, for I shall always be with you, even to the End of the World.

Thus our Lord *Jesus*, all glorious, and resplendantly shining, ascended into Heaven, triumphantly leading with him the noble Tribe of

Z

holy

holy Fathers, and fulfilling that which the Prophet *Micah* had said long before of his Ascension; *And their King shall pass before them, and the Lord at the Head of them.* So that they all follow'd him with unspeakable Joy, singing Canticles of Praises and Thanksgiving to him for their Deliverance from all Sorrow, and their Entrance into all Joy and never-ending Felicity.

And *Michael*, the Prince of God's celestial Host going before, carried the joyful Tidings of their Lord's ascending, at which the whole heavenly Court of celestial Spirits came forth to meet their Lord, and with all Worship and Reverence they led him with Hymns and Songs of Jubilation, repeating with inexpressible Joy, *Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.*

Having paid their due Reverence to the Lord, and ended the joyful Canticles, which related to his glorious Ascension, the Angels and the holy Fathers began to rejoice with each other. And what Tongue can express, or Mind conceive that which pass'd between them at this happy, truly happy Meeting? The blessed Spirits first began to congratulate them on their Arrival, saying in this Manner: Ye Princes of God's People, ye are welcome to our eternal Habitation, and we rejoice and are glad at your Arrival; Ye are all gather'd together and wonderfully exalted with our God, *Alleluia*: Therefore rejoice, and sing to him who so gloriously ascendeth to Heaven, and above the Heaven of Heavens, *Alleluia.*

To which the holy Fathers again joyfully replied. To you, Princes of God's People; *Alleluia*: Our Guardians and Helpers, *Alleluia*: Joy and Peace for ever, *Alleluia*: Let us sing and make Mirth to our King and our Saviour, *Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia*. Now we joyfully enter into the House of our Lord, *Alleluia*, to remain for ever in the glorious City of God, *Alleluia*. As Sheep of our Lord's Pasture we enter his Gates, *Alleluia*, with Hymns and Canticles, *Alleluia*, for the Lord of Power is with us, *Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia*. In this Manner they sang and rejoiced. For according to the Prophet: *The Lord is ascended in Shouts of Joy, and the Lord in the Sound of a Trumpet.*

Our Lord *Jesus* ascended visibly for the greater Comfort of his Mother and Disciples, that they might see him as far as they could. And behold *a Cloud received him out of their Sight*, and in an Instant they were present in Heaven. And as the blessed Virgin and the Disciples were looking still up to Heaven, two Angels stood beside them in white Garments, who began to comfort them, telling them not to look any longer after his Body, which they saw ascend so gloriously into Heaven, for that they should not see him any more in that Form till the Day of Judgment, when he should come to judge the Quick and the Dead; they bid them return into the City again, and there to expect the Coming of the Holy Ghost, as he himself had told them. Our blessed Lady spoke to the Angels, desiring them to recommend her to her blessed Son. Who, profoundly in-

cling to her, promised gladly to fulfill her Command. And the Apostles and *Mary Magdalen* recommended themselves in the same Manner. After this, the Angels departing, they went, according as they had been appointed into the City, unto *Mount Sion*, and waited there the Coming of the Holy Ghost.

Our Lord *Jesus*, in Company with that blessed Tribe of holy Souls, open'd the Gates of Heaven which for a long Space of Time had been shut to Mankind, and as a victorious Conqueror, triumphantly enter'd in, and joyfully inclining to his Father, said: Oh holy Father, I return thee Thanks for the glorious Victory thou hast given me over all our Enemies; behold, o eternal Father, I here present to thee our Friends, who till this Time have been detain'd in Banishment and in Prison! And as I have promised to my Disciples and Brethren, who I have left in the World, to send them the Holy Ghost the Comforter, I beseech thee to fulfill my Promise, for to thy Care and Protection I recommend them. The Father raising him up, placed him on his Right Hand, and said: My blessed Son, to thee all Power is given in Heaven and Earth, wherefore concerning all thou hast asked, dispose and order as shall seem most expedient to thee.

After this the angelical Spirits and holy Fathers, who remain'd all the Time prostrate before the Throne of the most adorable Trinity, arose, and, with all Reverence, re-assumed their *Alleluias*, and spiritual Canticles, and sang joyfully to the Lord.

For

For if *Moses* and the Children of *Israel*, after they had cross'd the *Red-Sea*, sang a Song to the Lord saying: Let us sing to the Lord, &c. And *Mary* the Prophetess, *Aaron's* Sister, and other Women going out after her, sang to the Lord with Timbrels, and with Dances, with how much more Reason should they do it now, after the Victory obtain'd over all their Enemies? And when *David* brought the Ark of the Lord to *Jerusalem*, the whole Multitude of the Children of *Israel* sang to the Lord, and *David* play'd before the Lord on all manner of Instruments, on Harps, on Timbrels, on Cornets, and Cymbals, and *David* danced before the Lord with all his Might, 2 Kings 6. with how much more Reason did they now do it, when present with their Lord, in the perfect Enjoyment of so great Happiness? And if St. *John* the Evangelist, as we read in the *Apocalypse*, heard a Voice from Heaven of a Hundred forty four thousand playing on their Harps, and singing a new Song before the Throne of God, and the Lamb, whatever that might represent I cannot but piously imagin that it was on this Day, more than on any other, fulfill'd. They all sing, they all rejoice, and exult with utmost Jubilation, and with Shouts of Mirth they praise and glorify the Lord, so that the whole heavenly *Jerusalem* echo's with joyful *Alleluias*, and Canticles of Mirth were heard throughout every Part.

Never from the Beginning of Time was there ever known so solemn a Festivity, nor shall ever be again, till after the last and general

ral Day of Judgment, when all the Elect shall meet together in their beautified and glorious Bodies.

And therefore this solemn Feast of the Ascension, if every Circumstance be duly consider'd, is the greatest of all Solemnities. Which we shall find to be true if we briefly consider the rest. The Incarnation of God is a great Feast, a Day of solemn Jubilation to us, but not to him, since he was then confined within the narrow Compass of the small Inclosure of a virginal Womb : His Nativity was likewise a great Feast and a Day of publick Rejoicing to us. But he was to be pitied, who was born to so great Poverty, Suffering, and Penury. His Death and Suffering was a great Feast to us, because our Sins were then all blotted out ; but as he suffer'd most cruel Torments, and a most vile Death, it was not to him, nor ought it to be to us a Subject of Joy. The Resurrection of our Lord *Jesus* was a most solemn Festivity both to him and to us, because he appear'd as a triumphant Conqueror over Death, and we remain'd justified, and in the Opinion of St. *Augustin*, was a more holy Feast than the rest, which may be understood of those which proceeded it. For the Day of the Ascension seems still to be more holy and greater than that, for though our Lord rise then from the Dead ; yet he still remained on Earth, the Gates of Heaven were not yet open'd, nor were the holy Fathers then presented to his Father, which was all fulfill'd on the Day of his Ascension. And if we consider, whatever God wrought,

wrought, before this, he wrought to This End, without which his Work would have been imperfect. For Heaven and Earth, with all Things in them, were made for Man ; and Man was made only for God, and to enjoy him in his Glory : To which Glory, no one tho' ever so just could ever attain after Sin till this Day. Whence you may in some measure comprehend how great and wonderful is this Day, which may properly be call'd the solemn and joyful festivity of our Lord *Jesus*. For on this Day was he first seated in Glory, in the Humanity he had assumed, at the Right Hand of his Father, and enjoy'd a perfect Rest from all his Labours.

This Day is also a Feast of great Joy and Glory to the blessed Spirits of Heaven, for on this Day they received a new Satisfaction, in the Sight of their Lord, whom before they had not seen, under the Veil of his sacred Humanity. And on this Day was began to be repair'd the Ruins of their heavenly Company, occasion'd by the Fall of their reprobate Brethren, some of whose Vacancies were fill'd up by a glorious Number of blessed Souls, of Patriarchs, Prophets, and others, who on this Day triumphantly enter'd the heavenly City of *Jerusalem*, and took Possession of it as their own Right and Inheritance. Wherefore as we solemnly celebrate the Feast of one Saint or Martyr who is departed this Life, and enter'd the Glory of Heaven, how much more ought we to do the same for so many thousands who enter'd together in Company with the HOLY OF HOLIES, who is far more worthy all Praise, Honour and Glory, than all the Saints and Angels together.

This

This Day is likewise a Feast of special Joy to the blessed Virgin, inasmuch as she beheld her blessed Son *Jesus*, perfect God, and perfect Man, crown'd with Glory and Triumph, ascend victoriously to Heaven.

'Tis also a Feast of Joy to us, for on this Day was our Nature first exalted above the highest Heavens, and had he not ascended we could not have received the greatest of all Gifts, the Holy Ghost, whom he had promised to send us. Wherefore he said to his Disciples : *It is expedient for you that I go, for if I go not, the Paraclet. shall not come to you.* St. Bernard saith, in his Sermon on this Day, That the glorious Feast of the Ascension is the End and Accomplishment of all other Feasts and Solemnities, and a blessed Conclusion of the weary Pilgrimage of *Jesus Christ* on Earth.

Hence then may you gather, Pious Reader, that this Feast is greater and more solemn than all others, and that Soul, which earnestly and and truly loves our Lord *Jesus*, should on this Day lift up his Mind more fervently towards Heaven, and endeavour to receive a greater Plenitude of spiritual Comfort and Joy than on all other Festivals of the Year. For our Lord said to his Disciples : *Truly if you loved me you would rejoice and be glad, because I go to the Father.* Whence it appears from his own Words that there was no Day in Heaven more joyful than this, which lasted till the Day of *Pentecost* following, and we may devoutly imagin it to have been keep'd and solemnized in this manner.

The Ascension of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus* was about the sixth Hour. And although the whole

JESUS CHRIST.

361

whole Court of Heaven made a general Rejoicing in a manner beyond all Expression; yet from the Hour of his Ascension to the sixth Hour of the next Day, we may piously imagin that the Angels more particularly celebrated this joyful Festival. And in the same manner, on the second the Archangels. On the third Day the Virtues. On the fourth Day the Powers. On the fifth the Principalities. On the sixth the Dominations. On the seventh the Thrones. On the eighth the Cherubims. And on the ninth Day the Seraphims, which are the nine Orders of holy Angels, who continued their joyful Solemnity till the Viglil of *Pentecost*, from which Time, to the third Hour of the Day following, which is *Whitsunday*, the holy Fathers, with the rest of their blessed Company, made the same solemn Rejoicings. Thus, during the Space of ten Days before the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon Earth, they all continued in an uninterrupted Acelamation of Praise, Glory, and Thanksgiving to God, to whom be continued the same by every Creature to the End of the World, and for ever, *Amen.*



Aa

CHAP.

C H A P. LXXXIV.

Of the Coming of the Holy Ghost.

OUR Lord *Jesus* being ascended into Heaven, his blessed Mother with the Disciples return'd to *Jerusalem*, as the Angels had told them, and with great Joy and Comfort remain'd there the Space of ten Days in fervent Prayer, expecting the Coming of the Holy Ghost.

When the tenth Day was come after the Ascension, our Lord *Jesus* said to his Father: My beloved Father, the Time of Grace is near, be mindful, I beseech thee, of the Promise I made to my Brethren, concerning the Holy Ghost. To whom the Father: My beloved Son, the Promise you have made is most grateful in my Sight, and I am well pleased it should be perform'd, and as the Time is now come to fulfill it; let the Holy Ghost descend, to replenish and fill them with his Grace, to comfort and strengthen them, to instruct and teach them, and bestow on them abundance of all heavenly Virtues.

The Holy Ghost descended then on *Whit-Sunday* in Fire-Tongues, upon a hundred and twenty Disciples, who at that Time were gather'd together, and fill'd them with all Grace and Virtue: By which they were so greatly strengthen'd and inflam'd, that they immediately went forth, and began to preach the Gospel throughout

JESUS CHRIST.

363

throughout the whole World, and in great Measure made it subject to their Doctrine.

This Day is then the Feast of Love, for, as *St. Gregory* saith, it is the Feast of him who is Love itself. For which Reason he who truly desires to serve God should endeavour in this holy Solemnity to be enflam'd with Love, or at least to be enkindled with a vehement Desire of being so, free from any Mixture of the Love of this World. For, as *St. Bernard* assures us, he is greatly mistaken who thinks to unite Heaven with Earth, the sweet Balme of spiritual Comfort, with the Enjoyments of worldly Vanities, or the bountiful Gifts of the Holy Ghost with the deceitful Flatteries of the Flesh.

Let us therefore, Devout Reader, wholly forsake the fleeting Vanities of this World, and purify our Hearts from all earthly and vain Love to Creatures, and lead a Life of Devotion and Prayer as the Apostles did, expecting the Coming of the Holy Ghost. Thus may we hope to be visited by him, as the Apostles were, and to receive all spiritual Comfort and Grace for our Souls.

That we may therefore be able to receive the singular Gifts of this divine Spirit, and to attain to that Bliss to which our Lord is ascended, and prepared the Way for us to follow, let us break off all unnecessary Engagements with this wretched World, and take no Delight in the foul Satisfactions of the Flesh, nor feed its unlawful Desires, but ever earnestly wish, with the Apostle, to be separated from it. So that through the Grace of the divine Paraclete, the holy Ghost, we may faithfully
endea-

The LIFE of

endeavour to follow the Example of our Lord *Jesus Christ* in this World, and hereafter to ascend with him into the glorious City of the heavenly *Jerusalem*: Where he, sovereign King, together with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, one God in perfect Trinity, liveth and reigneth for ever World without End. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

